

Horizon

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

TOWARDS A NEW CLASSICISM

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COMMENT

THE death of Valéry has removed one of the elixirs of western civilisation. While our full tribute and estimate is being prepared, it is worth while recalling a last interview with him in January of this year. Valéry then seemed somewhat old and tired but mentally entirely alive. He talked very fast and in the back of his throat with a kind of raucous purring which I found very difficult to follow. He was immensely distinguished, inevitably the *cher maître*. He talked to me about England and described a visit to Meredith at Box Hill which had been arranged for him by Henry Harland. Wearing a top hat he advanced along the platform to greet Meredith, also wearing a top hat, who fell forward flat on his face, picked himself up and came forward without a word, as if such a prostration was the most natural thing in the world. He went on to talk of that London of the Yellow Book, of the introductions to it which Mallarmé gave him, of the reproaches he used to receive for his idleness, 'for I was at that time very idle though I hope I have made up a little for it since'—he then moved on immediately to his present English friends, Mr. T. S. Eliot and Mr. John Hayward. I was able to give him news of them and also to tell him about Day Lewis' magnificent translation of the *Cimetière Marin*. Here he related, with feline savagery, an incident at one of his last lectures at the *Collège de France*. A young man had come up to him and said that he had once greatly admired that poem, but that now since he realized that it was not '*la littérature engagée*' he could not enjoy it any more. '*La littérature engagée*'—the phrase seemed to rattle from the back of his palate—'what rubbish! There were always moments in the history of civilizations when literature seemed to have responsibilities—perhaps this was one of them—but they soon blew over,' and as he spoke one felt that all the authority of the nineteenth century was behind the remark. As always when meeting these great writers whom for years one has loved and admired there was a sense of inadequacy, for how can one communicate to a small mocking figure across a tea-table the glory of the wake which the passage of the great vessel of his work has left for over twenty years across the ocean of European thought. A friend of his told me that he seemed now to make fun of everything—except perhaps woman—for his tone would sometimes hold a certain reverence when he spoke of her. *Tout est magie dans les rapports entre homme*

et femme. Certainly his *Mauvaises Pensées* (the most original of his last books) is a devastating and ferocious panorama of human wisdom—a nihilist's breviary. It is nice to know that he lived to appreciate John Hayward's translation of *Mon Faust* in HORIZON (the fragment seems to me to hold the quintessence of the serene exaltation of pagan old age) and that his fears lest the rendering of *tu* and *vous*—a transition which he felt was very important in the text and which he was afraid would not easily be conveyed in English—were groundless—yes, it is nice, it is reassuring to know such things, yet in the light of that dazzling intelligence which is now for ever extinguished—except in his books—it is completely unimportant. It is the living presence of such giants for which Europe, bewildered and self-brutalising, is now crying out.

* * *

In England we still retain one or two of our luminaries of civilization. One is Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith who celebrated his eightieth birthday on 18 October. To my mind, quite apart from what he says, he writes English better than anyone now living, and it is to his collected essays, *Reperusals*, and to his autobiography that I turn, rather than to the almost over-fastuous *Trivia*, to be reminded of the modulations of which our vocabulary is capable. He has defined literature as 'the art of making people real to themselves by words', as 'that useless ornament and flower', as St.-Beuve described it. 'That delicate superfluity of life, which is the most precious and least perishable of all things on this perishable earth'—and that is a definition that will do to go on with. How prophetic is his description of the November ritual at Altamura, the secular monastery whose existence he imagined as long ago as 1898!

'Brief, however, as life may be, the pleasures of life are still more fleeting; and in November the Altamurans, following the course of human experience, turn from the poor earth and its joys, to those forces that make for the mockery and derision of human hopes, and the destruction of human existence—the decay of religions and civilizations, the prosperity of the wicked, and all the sinister aspects of creation—ill-boding stars, eclipses, wars, plagues, earthquakes and inundations.

'The Saints of this month are the great Pessimists, and Cynics and Suicides, the heathen Gods which were Devils, Moloch, Hammon, Chemosh, Typhon, Peor and the Baalim.'

LOUIS MACNEICE
WESTERN LANDSCAPE

In doggerel and stout let me honour this country
Though the air is so soft that it smudges the words
And herds of great clouds find the gaps in the fences
Of chance preconceptions and foam-quoits on rock-points
At once hit and miss, hit and miss.
So the kiss of the past is narcotic, the ocean
Lollingly lullingly over-insidiously
Over and under crossing the eyes
And docking the queues of the teetotum consciousness
Proves and disproves what it wants.
For the western climate is Lethe,
The smoky taste of cooking on turf is lotus,
There is affirmation and abnegation together
From the broken bog with its veins of amber water,
From the distant headland, a sphinx's fist, that barely grips the sea,
From the taut-necked donkey's neurotic-asthmatic-erotic
 lamenting,
From the heron in trance and in half-mourning,
From the mitred mountain weeping shale.

O grail of emerald passing light
And hanging smell of sweetest hay
And grain of sea and loom of wind
Weavingly laughingly leavingly weepingly—
Webs that will last and will not.
But what
Is the hold upon, the affinity with
Ourselves of such a light and line,
How do we find continuance
Of our too human skeins of wish
In this inhuman effluence?
O relevance of cloud and rock—
If such could be our permanence!
The flock of mountain sheep belong
To tumbled screes, to tumbling seas
The ribboned wrack, and moor to mist;

But we who savour longingly
 This plenitude of solitude
 Have lost the right to residence,
 Can only glean ephemeral
 Ears of our once beatitude.
 Caressingly cajoling—
 Take what you can for soon you go—
 Consoling, coquettishly,
 The soft rain kisses and forgets,
 Silken mesh on skin and mind;
 A deaf-dumb siren that can sing
 With finger-tips her falsities,
 Welcoming, abandoning.

O Brandan, spindrift hermit, who
 Hankering roaming un-homing up-anchoring
 From this rock wall looked seawards to
 Knot the horizon round your waist,
 Distil that distance and undo
 Time in a quintessential West:
 The best negation, round as nought,
 Stiller than stolen sleep—though bought
 With mortification, voiceless choir
 Where all were silent as one man
 And all desire fulfilled, unsought.
 Thought:

The curragh went over the wave and dipped in the trough
 When that horny-handed saint with the abstract eye set off
 Which was fourteen hundred years ago—maybe never—
 And yet he bobs beyond that next high crest for ever.

Feeling:

Sea met sky, he had neither floor nor ceiling,
 The rising blue of turf-smoke and mountain were left behind,
 Blue neither upped nor downed, there was blue all round the
 mind.

Emotion:

One thought of God, one feeling of the ocean,
 Fused in the moving body, the unmoved soul,
 Made him a part of a not to be parted whole.
 Whole.

And the West was all the world, the lonely was the only,
The chosen—and there was no choice—the Best,
For the beyond was here . . .

But for us now

The beyond is still out there as on tiptoes here we stand
On promontories that are themselves a-tiptoe
Reluctant to be land. Which is why this land
Is always more than matter—as a ballet
Dancer is more than body. The West of Ireland
Is brute and ghost at once. Therefore in passing
Among these shadows of this permanent show
Flitting evolving dissolving but never quitting—
This arbitrary and necessary Nature
Both bountiful and callous, harsh and wheedling—
Let now the visitor, although disfranchised
In the constituencies of quartz and bog-oak
And ousted from the elemental congress,
Let me at least in token that my mother
Earth was a rocky earth with breasts uncovered
To suckle solitary intellects
And limber instincts, let me, if a bastard
Out of the West by urban civilization
(Which unwished father claims me—so I must take
What I can before I go) let me who am neither Brandan
Free of all roots nor yet a rooted peasant
Here add one stone to the indifferent cairn . . .
With a stone on the cairn, with a word on the wind, with
a prayer in the flesh let me honour this country.

THE CROMLECH

From trivia of froth and pollen
White tufts in the rabbit warren
And every minute like a ticket
Nicked and dropped, nicked and dropped,
Extracters and abstracters ask
What emerges, what survives,
And once the stopper is unstopped
What was the essence in the flask
And what is Life apart from lives
And where, apart from fact, the value.

To which we answer, being naïve,
Wearing the world upon our sleeve,
That to dissect a given thing
Unravelling its complexity
Outrages its simplicity
For essence is not merely core
And each event implies the world,
A centre needs periphery.

This being so, at times at least
Granted the sympathetic pulse
And granted the perceiving eye
Each pregnant with a history,
Appearance and appearances—
In spite of the philosophers
With their jejune dichotomies—
Can be at times reality.

So Tom and Tessy holding hands
(Dare an abstraction steal a kiss?)
Cannot be generalized away,
Reduced by bleak analysis
To pointers illustrating laws
Which drain the colour from the day;
Not mere effects of a crude cause
But of themselves significant,
To rule-of-brain recalcitrant,
This that they are and do is This . . .

Tom is here, Tessy is here
At this point in a given year
With all this hour's accessories,
A given glory—and to look
That gift-horse in the mouth will prove
Or disprove nothing of their love
Which is as sure intact a fact,
Though young and supple, as what stands
Obtuse and old, in time congealed,
Behind them as they mingle hands—
Self-contained, unexplained,
The cromlech in the clover field.

LITTORAL

Indigo, mottle of purple and amber, ink,
Damson whipped with cream, improbable colours of sea
And unanalysable rhythms—fingering foam
Tracing, erasing its runes, regardless
Of you and me
And whether we think it escape or the straight way home.

The sand here looks like metal, it feels there like fur,
The wind films the sand with sand;
This hoary beach is burgeoning with minutiae
Like a philosopher
Who, thinking, makes cats' cradles with string—or a widow
Who knits for her sons but remembers a tomb in another land.

Brain-bound or heart-bound sea—old woman or old man—
To whom we are cyphers, creatures to ignore,
We poach from you what images we can,
Luxuriously afraid
To plump the Unknown in a bucket with a spade—
Each child his own sea shore.

LAST BEFORE AMERICA

A spiral of green hay on the end of a rake:
The moment is sweat and sun-prick—children and old women
Big in a tiny field, midgets against the mountain,
So toy-like yet so purposed you could take
This for the Middle Ages.

At night the accordion melts in the wind from the sea
From the bourne of emigrant uncle and son, a defeated
Music that yearns and abdicates; chimney-smoke and spindrift
Mingle and part as ghosts do. The decree
Of the sea's divorce is final.

Pennsylvania or Boston? It was another name,
A land of a better because an impossible promise
Which split these families; it was to be a journey
Away from death—yet the travellers died the same
As those who stayed in Ireland.

Both myth and seismic history have been long suppressed
Which made and unmade Hy Brasil—now an image
For those who despise charts but find their dream's endorsement
In certain long low islets snouting towards the West
Like cubs that have lost their mother.

THIERRY MAULNIER

TOWARDS A NEW
CLASSICISM?

IN considering the question whether the coming years may see the birth of a new classicism in France, I must begin by removing a possible source of confusion. I shall be speaking of a new classicism in the strict meaning of the term; not of what is known as Neoclassicism. The movement which for over a century—ever since the great romantic period, to be exact—has gone under the name of Neoclassicism, and to promote which attempts have periodically been made, is no more than a return to the formal methods of composition introduced and scrupulously followed by our leading writers and artists of the seventeenth century, and also to the special subject-matter (ancient myths, an attitude to life and morality embodied in ‘noble sentiments’) which inspired their work. A return to classical standards is always feasible, and today we have a relatively large number of writers (of the second rank, it must be admitted) who profess to disdain as ‘vulgar errors’ all the literary experiments made since the middle of the seventeenth century, and hold that the sole criterion of artistic perfection was established once for all in that much-favoured age. What these writers are upholding is not so much classicism as what I would call ‘academicism’; they are a decadent posterity of the true classics. Nor should we forget that when, round about 1660, the younger school of writers, destined to become our classics, formulated and made good their æsthetic programme, they were regarded as dangerous innovators, not to say revolutionaries.

So the question which I propose to discuss—Is a new classicism possible?—does not mean ‘Can we revert to classical models and reproduce them in our time?’ but, rather: ‘Have we today conditions favourable to the creation of new classical models and the making of another “classical revolution”?’

I shall therefore leave out of consideration our contemporary authors of five-act tragedies, or aphorisms in the manner of La Rochefoucauld, and of that fiction in a would-be Stendhalian

manner (a strain of classicism pervades the typical nineteenth-century French novel) which still has much success in provincial circles. And I shall also leave out of account—though this is far more interesting—the position of certain living French authors who seem to have returned to a classical style of writing and construction. Such writers as Gide, Valéry and Jouhandeau describe in a style coming very near that of the seventeenth century the intellectual and moral problems of the present age; and the same is true of such a writer as Cocteau. For Aragon, too, a poetic and romantic diction closely approaching our traditional literary ideal is, paradoxically enough, the outcome of an æsthetic adventure pressed to the extreme limits of surrealism, and of a set purpose to give expression to revolutionary ideas, political and social.

After a long series of experiments with language—romanticism, symbolism, surrealism—a sort of fatigue has set in, accompanied by a desire to communicate with the average reader and to find a form of expression at once more restrained and lucid, and less 'private'. But though these may be signs predictive of a new classicism, they do not constitute it. Classicism can exist only when an *ensemble* of writers in a given period accepts, so to speak, the discipline of a classical ideal as to style and language, and when this discipline, voluntarily undergone, embodies the prevailing tendencies of an age, bringing all its forces into play and energizing its potentialities.

Quite obviously there is not even the semblance of any such uniformity in the contemporary literary scene in France. On the contrary, what we find is an extreme diversity, an unrest manifesting itself under the most varied aspects. Belated romantics and symbolists, stylists of the new school, lyrical and rhetorical writers, rub shoulders, dispute, or go their several ways in strict aloofness. It is impossible to speak of a common, or even a predominating, style in a literary era which includes amongst its outstanding figures such fundamentally different writers—different both in style and thought (for style and thought are inseparable, since, as Jean-Paul Sartre has indicated, a man's style is always conditioned by his metaphysics)—as Valéry, Giraudoux, Montherlant, Claudel, Gide, Jouhandeau, Giono, Sartre and Malraux. And yet, though to French eyes our literature of today may seem anticlassical in form and mood, a great many foreigners appeal to it as to a norm of balance, universality and

communicability, which, to their mind, is lacking in their national literatures. Thus while, judged by French standards, our contemporary work has all the marks of anticlassicism—over-abundance, diversity of trend and instability of mood—it still impresses the outside world as continuing the classical tradition. The inference appears to be that, between French literary style and classicism, there is an affinity so profound that France retains her bias towards classicism even in those literary experiments which seemingly defy it.

Indeed it seems that the function of France is essentially classical, much as it is her vocation to assimilate and transmute the elements that come to her from outside; to harmonize and integrate them. If we survey the literature of Europe from the Renaissance onwards to the middle of the nineteenth century we find that it falls into approximately three periods: that of Baroque literature, extending to the middle of the seventeenth century; a classical phase lasting until the middle of the eighteenth century; and, finally, the romantic movement. Baroque literature was European; round about the year 1600 it was supreme no less in Italy and Spain than in France and England. The romantic movement, too, was European in its scope, flourishing in Germany and England as well as in France at the beginning of the nineteenth century; indeed its highest achievements were not the work of Frenchmen. Classicism, however, as we find it in the year 1660 or thereabouts, was not a European phenomenon but a French one. Though it had influence abroad, rousing not only admiration but desires to imitate, it was never acclimatized outside France to any great extent. It is a curious fact that the literary style which proudly claimed to express the essential truths of human life under their widest, most timeless aspects—a style which sought its models and sources of inspiration not in national legendary lore or history but in the common stock of European culture, Greek, Roman or Christian, as the case might be; a style which rightly or wrongly set out to be not merely the highest expression of the genius of one particular nation, but the truly universal language of Reason and the Emotions—it is curious that this style is precisely the one which, in the course of the great movements of European literature, supremely deserves the epithet of *French*, and, from the standpoint of literary history, can be regarded as *national* in the full meaning of the term. So much so that the most 'classical' of our writers, he whose art strikes us as most independent of time

and place, who in his tragedies presented none but Roman, Greek, Turkish or Biblical heroes and admitted not a single Frenchman amongst his characters, is actually the French writer whom foreigners regard as the most impossible to transplant or translate, the least accessible to a non-French temperament, the most typically French of all our writers: Racine.

Thus, on the face of it, there seems to be an instinctive trend towards classicism in the French literary genius; a trend to which even our most thorough-paced anticlassicists conform to a greater extent than they probably suspect. But, at this point, we come against a difficulty. The exact meaning of the term 'classicism' is far from clear; indeed, it lends itself to several misconceptions. True, in surveying the panorama of our seventeenth-century literature one can see easily enough how the classical aspiration towards universality and permanence in communicative art was fully satisfied by the acceptance of archetypal forms, whose validity seemed established for all time; fixed stars in the bright firmament of ancient Greece and Rome, shining immutably for all the peoples of the earth and future generations. And yet one soon discovers that the apparent fidelity of our so-called classical writers to a previous form of classicism involves a misconception. The classical style of the Greek past was a wholly original style; whereas even the classical Latin style was in many respects derivative, based on imitation and borrowing its principles from those laid down by its great precursor. And similarly, in the seventeenth century, our French classicism borrowed a large number of its themes and modes of expression from the classicisms preceding it. It follows that any modern revival of classicism is bound to refer to earlier models; to derive from them its justification and its nourishment. But, by the mere fact of doing this, it admits a factor of decay—which we may describe as 'academicism'. Imitation of the style of an earlier age inevitably falsifies it, for something tawdry and, so to speak, impure is introduced; the vice of plagiarism. To be immune from such 'impurities' as academicism or pedantic turns of speech, a new classicism must take the form, not of a reaction, a surrender to the past, but of what I would call a *classical revolution*. It will be successful only in so far as it sets out to give a response on classical lines—in other words, a response that is both final and complete—to contemporary problems of expression; a response that is

original in the full meaning of the term and owes little to solutions sufficient to their day but not to ours. Thus the lessons of the seventeenth century can be of service to the modern writer only in so far as he recognizes his freedom to diverge from them.

Having made this reservation as to the lessons seventeenth-century classicism has to give us, we may now observe that classicism, aiming as it does at synthesis, combines within its structural precision and apparent symmetry a number of antinomies. Thus the two most characteristic claims of the great classical writers of the seventeenth century seem inconsistent. First, they profess complete verisimilitude or naturalness, the holding of a mirror up to life; and, secondly, they claim to dispense with every fortuitous element, to the exclusion of all anecdotes, incidents and epithets that are not directly relevant; and to construct their works on purely logical lines, applying the same method to each individual phrase; in a word, to admit only the *necessary*. But, at first sight, it would appear that this principle of truth to life (in virtue of which it is the writer's duty to refine himself out of existence in his work, or make himself invisible) is hardly to be reconciled with the principle of inevitableness, or necessity, in virtue of which the work is to bear from start to finish the mark of a controlling will behind it. However, this inconsistency is merely on the surface; we must not forget that the 'classical man' is one who deliberately achieves a synthesis and, in so doing, fights on two fronts. In the Baroque or 'mannered' literature of the pre-classical period—a literature whose scope and subtlety command the admiration—we find a wealth of studied artifice co-existing with a spontaneity verging on *laissez-aller*. Sometimes our great masters of this school carried their experiments with words, their intellectual idealism, concision of thought and hermetical diction to the furthest extreme; and sometimes, again, like the romantics of a later age, they claimed a total freedom, entitling the artist to yield to the impulse of the moment and follow his star—in a word, to give rein to his 'inspiration'. In the classical theory of art we find a similar dualism, an insistence on the 'natural', but equally on 'Necessity', the need for Form—which enabled it to combat the two complementary excesses: exaggerated artifice, and a proneness to be carried away by words, which had led the authors of the Baroque period to the two extremes of excessive condensation and of undue laxity.

In any case a reconciliation between these opposites, the Natural and the Necessary, may be effected by a style of extreme spareness or, let us say, simplicity. One thing is certain: that this two-fold refusal, characteristic of the classical mind, this 'battle on two fronts' as I have called it, permeates the classical theory of art under its every aspect. Classicism raises barriers equally against archaic and against decadent tendencies in art; it combats with the same vigour aristocratic aloofness ('the writer should not demean himself to the level of the mob,' wrote the Baroque poet Pontus de Tyard), in favour of the rights of the common tongue—as Hugo was to do at a later day—and, no less, the invasion of the language by vulgar idiom and pedantic jargon. Thus we need not be surprised if classicism has been regarded very differently in different epochs, and whereas it impressed contemporaries as bold to the point of crudeness, the romantics accused it of frigidity and subservience to convention. In the ebb and flow of literary taste, the constant alternation between enlargement and restriction of the creative field, between the systoles and diastoles essential to the very life of literature, a classical age stands out as a phase uniquely stable, when for a memorable moment balance is attained and life seen steadily and whole. These are hard conditions and we need not be surprised if a new classical age, when it emerges, proves short-lived.

Thus the writers of a classical period can be distinguished by two complementary aversions; they shun both over-confidence and excessive caution in dealing with the writer's medium of expression, in other words the language. Theoretical and critical inquiries into the nature and modalities of literary expression, no less than practical experiments in new forms of writing, are, as we all know, a feature, perhaps the distinctive feature, of contemporary literature throughout the world. Naturally enough, this interest in experimentation leads writers to range beyond the field of literary expression in its ordinary sense and to explore the nature of their medium. Thus several contemporary French writers have been led to examine the structure and function of language, while some going still further, have doubted the very possibility of a literary language adequate to the demands of the modern artist in words; and this attitude of something like despair is characteristic of our times. Yet it is not wholly new; the works of Rimbaud, Mallarmé and the surrealists are obviously more

of the nature of ventures into uncharted realms of diction, beyond accepted frontiers, than of a mere enlargement of the known resources of the language.

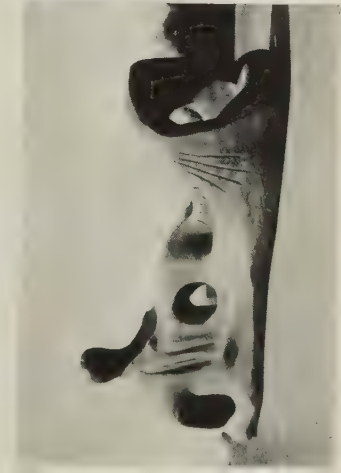
During recent years these linguistic problems have been closely studied not only by writers of the 'phenomenologist' school (of which J.-P. Sartre is an outstanding figure), but also by Jean Paulhan in *Les Fleurs de Tarbes* and *Clef de la poésie*, by Brice Parain in his *Essai sur la nature et les fonctions du langage*, by Maurice Blanchot in *Comment la littérature est-elle possible?* and in the preface to *Faux pas*. And here we come on a point of no small importance. All these writers accept in a general way the conclusion reached by Jean Paulhan that there are two attitudes which may be taken up regarding language—that of the 'terrorists' and that of the 'rhetoricians'.¹ The 'terrorists', whose influence prevailed throughout the nineteenth century, and who found their most radical exponents in the surrealists, are writers for whom the true function of the artist is to express a reality antecedent to, and transcending, the words available. This can be achieved only by breaking through the cramping forms of speech prevailing in the past, and by employing new, exciting and unheard-of combinations. The 'rhetoricians', on the other hand, for whose theories Paulhan, Parain, Blanchot, and also such writers as Valéry seem to have a more or less explicit preference, are those to whose way of thinking language, far from being a mask imposed upon reality, is, rather, its basis, the very substance of the writer's art. What he deals with is not the ineffable but, quite otherwise, the vocabulary, and his true function is to create reality by verbal collocations of the highest potency. Without deciding which of these two schools of thought has the better claim, one can at least affirm that the 'rhetorical' clan has this advantage over its rival: it makes literature possible. A group that regards the destruction of language as a necessary preliminary to creative writing must, if it presses the theory to its logical conclusion, end with the destruction of literature itself, and lapse into silence. The only other way out would be a conversion, the return to a communicable language. (The experiences of Rimbaud, Mallarmé and the surrealists are cases in point.) Literature is not a matter between the artist and his inspiration, but between him and the

¹This term has no disparagement; the *rhétoricien* is a member of the *classe de rhétorique*, a student of *litterae humaniores*. [Translator's note.]

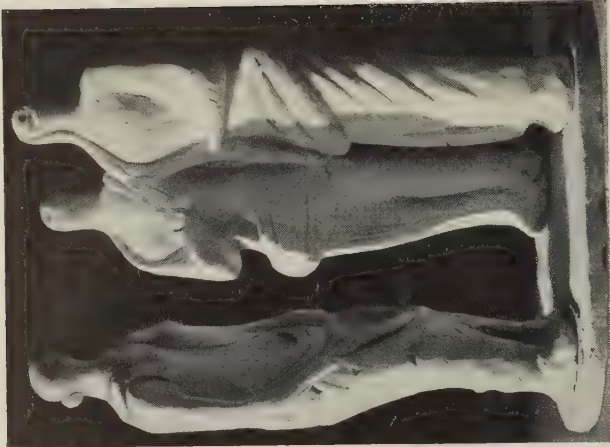
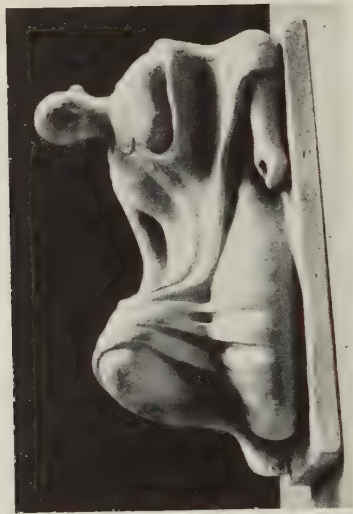
public. Its *raison d'être* is communication, and this is made possible only by the use of 'common places' in the literal meaning of the term: meeting-points between the writer and a more or less wide circle of readers.

Obviously this contemporary view—that the artist cannot treat his work as a purely personal concern or base it on a systematic destruction of language—furnishes a suitable starting-point for the rise of a new classicism. For one of the prerequisites of a classical era is that writers should not only believe communication possible, but also feel some confidence that the language they employ provides a reliable means of conveying their impressions, however personal, of reality.

It must not, however, be supposed that classicism necessarily accepts without reserve the modalities of the language as it finds them. Actually, the protests of the classical writer against excessive artifice and the abuse of metaphor, his care not to force the reader's attention by using too highly coloured words, but to achieve a perfect limpidity of style and, as it were, to make the words fade out into the meaning, go far to show that the classicist, no less than the revolutionary, feels a need to 'destroy' language and reduce it to a state of, so to speak, invisibility. The difference is that the classical writer considers that the true 'destruction' of the language, in so far as it facilitates literary communication, can take place only when the reader's attention is not arrested by the destructive process, and individual words are wholly fused in the clear radiance of the meaning they impart. In other words, he employs a style which, keeping close to the usages of common speech, differs only in its purity and tenseness. And here again we find the classicist fighting on two fronts, combating the extremists of both camps. For him language is neither the writer's ally nor an enemy, but a precious and precarious instrument which he must make his own. In classical art man neither expresses himself nor withdraws himself; he *realizes* himself, and bodies forth—so far as this is possible, that is to say in a manner always partial and provisional, nevertheless at certain moments almost godlike—the truth that is in him. Thus the classical writer feels a reasonable optimism (so far as language is concerned), tempered, however, with a certain pessimism, characteristic of all highly cultured epochs, as regards the perfection of man—and his intelligibility.



HENRY MOORE: New designs for sculpture, 1945



HENRY MOORE: New designs for sculpture, 1945

Seen from this angle, the state of France today may well be favourable to the birth of a new classicism. I have not in mind the fidelity of some of our traditionalist writers to a classical æsthetic cut-and-dried and fatally irrelevant to modern times; I am thinking, rather, of the co-existence today of a fundamental pessimism as to man's estate (a pessimism vigorously expressed by our young school of philosophers) and of a qualified but very real confidence in the supreme function of language; the confidence inspiring Valéry's famous lines:

*Honneur des hommes, saint Langage,
Discours prophétique et paré,
Belles chaînes en qui s'engage
Le Dieu dans la chair égaré.*

Classicism can provide the noble satisfactions arising from a union between the tragedy of human destiny and its perfect expression in words, whereby the tragedy is fully realized—and splendidly surpassed. Indeed it is thanks to the antinomian or dialectical processes of history that classicism comes into its own; it appears only when vigorously called into being by its contraries, by stresses that create a need for it. And, this being so, its true occasions lie not in those elements of 'Order', relics of an outworn classical tradition which linger on in modern France, but rather in an exuberance and diversity of literary forms, in mental unrest and the conflict of ideas.

[Translation by STUART GILBERT]

A. J. A. SYMONS

IRVING AND THE IRVINGITES

NOTE: *This paper was first read to The Sette of Odde Volumes, of which my brother was a member, before the Second World War. It has seemed better, however, to reprint the paper in its original form, rather than to tamper with it by making the alterations necessary to bring it, rather artificially and unsatisfactorily, 'up to date.'*—JULIAN SYMONS.

IT is difficult for the disillusioned generation that survived the greatest war in history, or its successors who have endured the long frustration of that war's aftermath, to realize that the parallel events of a hundred years before seemed, to a great number of English people, even more appalling, final and significant than our own grim experience. Yet such was the case. The combatants of 1918 had in their minds the knowledge of that earlier European conflict; for many years they had heard discussion concerning the prospect of war with Germany; and when the disaster came, it was accepted as a crisis of human greed and aggression, and fought in a spirit of political patriotism, with no religious implications. But to the Englishman at the end of the eighteenth century, the revolution in France was a thunderbolt from a clear sky, to be interpreted as a monition from heaven that the wickedness of men had not passed unnoticed. Our own uninformed dread of Soviet Russia and its works gives little more than a hint of the horror with which the devout English heard of the Terror in Paris, the destruction of the social order, and the execution of the French King. And when these upheavals were followed by the rise of Napoleon, by the overturning of throne after throne, by the establishment of new dynasties and a prolonged war, many who had previously been sceptical began to feel that such gigantic disturbances might well be followed by yet more disastrous marvels. One of the actors in the dramatic episode of ecclesiastical history that it is my purpose to outline expressed his belief in words that won the agreement of a great number of earnest men: 'These events, with all their accompaniments, are far too terrible, too unexpected, too strange,

to be considered as mere casualties . . . On the contrary, they have been considered by all right-thinking men, and have been rightly considered, as the tokens of the impending judgement of God, and as the signs of the coming of the end.'

This sense of uncertainty, of living amid events of supernatural importance, of 'the coming of the end', turned men's minds inwards to their faith, and outwards to the scriptures in which that faith is embodied. And those that sought, found an answer in the prophetic books of Daniel and of John. Belief in prophecy is one of the most universal attributes of man. The soothsayers of Egypt, the augurs of Rome, the oracles of Greece, the astrologers of the Middle Ages and the fortune-teller of our own day all alike testify to the widespread and instinctive belief that what is to happen in the future can in certain circumstances be known in the present. Even the sceptical scientists of our modern times seem half-converted to an acceptance of the prophetic dream. Christian doctrine in particular may be said to be based on prophecy, since the great difference between the Jew and the Gentile is that the latter believes that the prophecy of the Messiah's coming was fulfilled by Christ, whereas the former regards the prophecy as still unfulfilled. To the Christian, the pre-vision that is vouchsafed to prophets is one of God's ways of warning his subjects; and the Bible contains many prophecies, as yet unfulfilled, concerning the future and last judgement of mankind. The interpretation of these mysterious utterances had often been attempted, had, indeed, become an active and increasing study since the end of the seventeenth century. In the 1820's, with thrones tumbling ignominiously, and Europe still echoing with the tramping of many armies, it seemed that the vast actions and reactions of the external world were beginning to take the shape outlined in the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of St. John the Divine. Learned men spent sleepless nights and anxious days in the attempt to compel that vivid and eloquent imagery to yield its meaning, to discover whether or not Napoleon was the beast that rode up out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns, with ten crowns upon his horns and on his head the name of blasphemy; or whether the French Revolution really was, as seemed probable, that great earthquake foretold, after which the sun was to become black as sackcloth, the moon as blood, and the stars of heaven fall upon the earth 'even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs'. Opinions

differed, among those who presumed to explain these matters, as to the exact significance of these enigmatic mysteries, or the precise meaning of the angels and their vials, and other prophecies; but there seemed a general agreement that the woman 'arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations', sitting upon a scarlet beast having seven heads, was the Pope of Rome upon his seven hills; that the period of 1260 years mentioned in the Apocalypse extended from the edict of Justinian in A.D. 553 to the time when the Code Napoleon took its place; and finally that, as the conclusion of the events prophetically described, there would ensue the new heaven and the new earth of the millenium.

Among those who were fascinated by these speculations, Mr. Henry Drummond was perhaps the most important. Though a Scot by birth, Drummond was in many ways a typically English figure, the 'milord' of Continental fiction, the eccentric aristocrat. Descended from the family of Viscount Strathallan, grandson of Lord Melville, he married during his minority the eldest daughter of the Earl of Kinnoull. Witty, handsome, opinionated and immensely rich, he shone in such society as he chose to frequent. Few doors were closed to the brilliant banker, who had carried on with outstanding success the business established by his great uncle, had caused Parliament to make embezzlement of deposited money punishable by transportation, was accepted as an authority upon currency problems, and founded the professorship of political economy at Oxford. But there was a mystical as well as a practical side to his complex nature; and when, from religious zeal, he broke up his hunting establishment in Hampshire, he devoted his munificence to the unnecessary task of converting, not only the Catholics of the Continent, but also the unfortunate Jews of Asia, to his own evangelical Christianity.

The disputed interpretations of the prophetic books was exactly the problem to attract the vein of fantasy in his mind, and he entered upon its solution with enthusiasm, logic, and belief. After careful study of the fervid and various pamphlets in which the views of the experts were displayed, he offered a singular and characteristic suggestion. Since it was agreed that the day of judgement was approaching, and that the key to its time and conditions was contained in the Biblical discourses, why should not

those who were skilled in these matters assemble for a week in his country house to ascertain the exact period when the end was to be expected, in order that preparation might be made? Granting his premises there was reason in his conclusion, and he did not hesitate to give it effect. Accordingly, by special letter, the pious banker invited 'all the men, both ministers and laymen, of any orthodox communion, whom he knew or could ascertain to be interested in prophetic studies', to assemble at Albury, his house in Surrey, to deliberate upon the great questions involved. Many of the recipients of these 'special letters' did not know the writer; some did not accept his unusual invitation; but most were prepared to look their hobby-horses in the face, even in company. The meeting was fixed for the first day of Advent, in 1826; and on that date about twenty prophetic experts of varied race, rank and belief complied with the summons.

The order of proceeding was strenuous. At eight in the morning the Prophetic Parliament was brought together to listen to the grounds of argument laid down by the speaker for the day, taking notes but making no comments. After an hour of this, breakfast was served. At eleven, each man in turn offered his convictions upon the subject opened earlier in the morning, while the rest diligently took more notes. No appeal save to the text of the Scriptures was permitted; doubtful interpretations were referred to Joseph Wolff, a deeply learned, converted Hebrew who was one of the gathering. After four or five hours spent in this way, there was another, and doubtless welcome, interval for dinner. At seven the subject was resumed, and general discussion of difficulties permitted, until eleven o'clock, when the whole duties of the day were concluded with hymns and prayer.

It is not easy for imagination to reconstruct these earnest meetings to decide by study what future lay before the world. From the nature of man the cynic would naturally conclude that the session could not possibly last its allotted duration of six lengthy days; that long before that time disagreement would have sent the delegates back in wrath to the places from which they had come; or that, even if the patience of the twenty was equal to the strain of each others' theories, they would each remain of his own opinion at the end. Such opinions would be reasonable, and yet, in this case, wrong. At the end of the

appointed period the doors were opened on a body as nearly in agreement as it is possible for twenty men to be. That they were so was almost entirely due to the eloquence of the Reverend Edward Irving.

As to what was agreed upon in those strange circumstances, I shall speak again. For the moment let us turn to the contriver of this unpredictable accord. Both physically and mentally, Edward Irving was a remarkable man. He stood four inches over six feet; indeed his height, his tremendous shoulders and heavy frame, gave him in Hazlitt's eyes the appearance of a prize-fighter. But it was not his exceptional size, nor the strength and boniness of his features, nor his dark sombre face framed with masses of hair once coal-black and now turning iron-gray, nor even the terrific squint that marred his otherwise handsome head, that made all men turn to look again when first they met him. There was in the expression and restlessness of his eyes, in the heavy independence of his bearing, above all in the untameable fervour of his manner, something that proclaimed him as a man apart, as a man marked off for a mission and confident that he could fulfil it, something that caused De Quincey, when first he met Irving, to foretell of him that 'he was destined to a melancholy close of his career in lunacy'.

Whatever his future was to be, and in some ways it was dark enough, his success so far had been sensational. At the time of the first Albury conference he was thirty-four. Less than five years earlier he had come to London, an unknown tanner's son, to be the minister of a small and obscure chapel, after an undistinguished career in Glasgow as assistant to the famous Chalmers. Within six months he was a famous man. This transformation had been brought about by his astonishing gift of oratory, aided by one of those accidents that lead to fortune. Soon after Irving's advent in London, Sir James Mackintosh chanced into the Caledonian church in Hatton Garden to hear the new Scottish minister, and was struck by what he heard. He repeated one brilliant phrase to Canning, whose roused curiosity took him to the church on the following Sunday. Shortly afterwards, in an ecclesiastical debate in the Commons, Canning told the House that he had lately heard the most eloquent sermon he had ever listened to preached by the unknown minister of an unendowed church. The hint proved effective. Those whose interest was

aroused went to hear for themselves, and came away startled into conviction by the fervour of a man who could convince others because he himself believed. Week by week Irving's congregation was swelled by those who, having come once from curiosity, came again and again fascinated by the eloquence and doctrines of the Caledonian divine. Soon all roads to Hatton Garden were blocked for miles every Sunday by carriages, whose way in turn was blocked by thronging pedestrians, and by early arrivals waiting in queues for admission. Men and women fainted in the crush; tickets could be sold, by those who had a right to them, for half a guinea apiece; the audience (for it more deserved that name than congregation) was said to include Bentham, Wilberforce, Lady Jersey, Hazlitt, Godwin and, of course, Canning, as well as earls, duchesses, and the lesser fashionables.

De Quincey said of Irving, what Hazlitt and many others echoed, that he was 'unquestionably, by many, many degrees, the greatest orator of our times', but it was not Irving's oratory alone that gave him such command over his hearers that they submitted to discourses three hours in length. He was a fine scholar, deeply read in the English classics, who had based his style on the prose of Hooker and Milton. I possess Lionel Johnson's copy of his earliest sermons, and dozens of passages are scored for commendation by that exacting and impeccable critic. But it was his own utter conviction that was most convincing. To Irving the Bible was literally the word of Jehovah; and he reproached his hearers in stinging and astonishing words for their indifference 'as of a wanton to a sermon or a hardened knave to a judicial reprimand' to those words of revelation in which their future lay concealed. He was like Paul before Agrippa. As I have said already, the upheavals and astonishments of the political world had created in many thousands an uneasy sense of impending supernatural events; and when the gigantic, apparently inspired preacher spoke, from the text of John 'Search the Scriptures', on 'The Manner of Consulting the Oracles of God', most of those who heard were moved to belief, or an uneasy half-belief. The Press surmised that Irving's success would prove a nine days' wonder, but month followed month and the audience of the pale, dark-eyed clergyman, who seemed to burn with inward fires, grew more and more vast, more and more intense. Two

whole years went by, with the church still too small for the crowding worshippers. The devout were spurred to action by Mr. Dinwiddie; foundations for a new and larger church were laid in Regent Square.

During those two years, Carlyle and other friends noticed a change in Irving. Carlyle had known him in his youth at Annan, when he marvelled at the 'joy, health, and hopefulness without end' that looked out from 'the blooming young man'; and had become his friend at Kirkcaldy, when Irving, training for the ministry, had preceded the famous writer-to-be as master of the academy, and astonished the little town by his noble air and red tartan morning coat. But now, in London, it seemed to Carlyle that the excitement of applause and success, the idolizing of the Montagues and Stracheys (then as now, paramount in Bloomsbury) had turned his friend's head. In the first enthusiasm of his London preaching Irving had proclaimed no more than that the mysteries of God's will lay concealed in the scriptures, and that it behoved the devout to study them in the hope of throwing light upon the present and the future. Perhaps he had obeyed his own injunctions too faithfully. Or perhaps it was from Coleridge that he caught the conviction, by which he was now possessed, that the crisis of judgement was impending on the world. Certainly it was from Hartley Frere that he adopted what was called the 'Combined View' of the prophetic books, which confirmed his Coleridgian anticipations. As he read deeper and deeper, the solution Irving sought seemed to become more and more plain. The flower of his researches was the Albury conference. Twenty men, all skilled as he was in the scriptures, had tested his conclusions and found them warranted. Henceforth Edward Irving faced the world in the strange and exalted state of one who knew the truth. But it did not make him happier. He had married the wrong woman, Elizabeth Martin, not Jane Welsh.

The leading and essential points upon which unanimity was discovered at Albury were, that the Christian world was not to pass insensibly into the millennial state, but was to be terminated by judgements, ending in the destruction of the Church as it then visibly existed, the restoration of the Jews to their own land, and the second coming of Christ; and that the second coming would not be long delayed. Only in placing the second coming near at hand did this view differ from the orthodox; but that apparently

slight difference was to become the starting point of a strange sequence of events that was not to end even with Irving's death. For the meeting at Albury was repeated; closer and closer attention was given to all the Biblical references that bore upon the Advent; it was agreed that 1847 seemed the indicated date, and that before that time signs would be given of the approaching judgement by the revival of the spiritual gifts manifested in the Primitive Church, particularly the gifts of healing, of prophecy, and of speaking with unknown tongues. Accordingly, Irving, Drummond and the rest of the believers waited expectantly for signs of the supernatural events that were to mark the beginning of the end, and strove to win those who would listen to an appreciation of the crisis that was approaching. Such views, supported by the most powerful orator of the time, gained a widening credence. Nor was Drummond behind; by his wealth a new Quarterly, *The Morning Watch*, was established, which commanded a liberal sale and spread the teachings of Irving far beyond his congregation.

Belief is always easy to ridicule. To us, who know that the world did not end in 1847, there is now something pathetic in the faded anxieties and hopes of those eager men. But alas, after a hundred years all human anxieties and hopes are likely to seem pathetic, our own as well as Irving's. To an impartial, even if a sceptical observer, there must be something dignified and impressive in the logical expectancy with which these believers waited for the signs and wonders that were to be the heralds of a final dawn. They did not doubt that they would come; and they were not required to wait for long. In 1830 a young woman in Scotland was reported to have been suddenly blessed with the gift of tongues.

This woman, Mary Campbell, had lost her sister Isabella by consumption two years before, and had for some time lain in bed, with the anticipation of a similar ending. Isabella, the sister who had died, possessed during her lifetime a remarkable reputation for saintliness, which after her death was perpetuated in a memoir written by the local minister, a very intelligent and devout man. Six thousand copies of this memoir are said to have been sold in a week, and Isabella's grave became a place of pilgrimage. Many of those who made the journey paid, at the same time, a visit of sympathy to the surviving sister, and were

struck by the intelligence and feeling of the beautiful invalid, who was a close student of Irving's teaching, and before her illness had hoped to serve the Church as a missionary. One Sunday evening in March Mary, in the presence of a few friends, began to utter sounds incomprehensible to all present, including the speaker, but believed by them and by her to be a tongue such as of old might have been spoken on the day of Pentecost, or among the Christians of Corinth. Subsequently Mary expressed the belief that her 'tongue' was the language of a group of Islands in the Southern Pacific, though the utmost research, then and subsequently, failed to identify the hypothetical island.

Nor was this all. About fifteen miles from Fernicarry, the home of Mary Campbell, lived another pious family, the Macdonalds, two brothers and their sister Margaret, also a confirmed invalid. The Macdonalds were also followers of Irving's teachings. Early in 1830 Margaret experienced some mystical states of spiritual intensity in which she seemed wrapt into the next world, but this was accounted for as the ecstasy of the dying. In April, indeed, it was supposed that the end was near. After a week during which she had been hardly able to leave her bed, she prayed at length that her brother James might *at that time* be endowed with the power of the Holy Ghost. Almost instantly James calmly said 'I have got it'. Walking to his sister's bed he commanded the dying woman: 'Arise and stand upright'. She complied, though it seems clear that previously her strength would have been insufficient. James then wrote to the other invalid, Mary Campbell, fifteen miles away, and bade her also rise and walk. She too complied; she described the letter as 'the voice of Xt', and in her account of these occurrences says 'I was verily made in a moment to stand upon my feet, leap and walk, sing and rejoice'. A few evenings later George, the remaining Macdonald, was seized with the gift, and he too began to talk in an unknown tongue.

It may be imagined what effect the tidings of these events had upon the expectant little circle in distant London. Irving and his friends did not trust themselves to test the joyful news, though investigation was obviously called for. This delicate and important task was entrusted to a man who from his profession and training was hardly likely to be humbugged. Accordingly Mr. J. B. Cardale, a solicitor of the supreme court, who counted

Rugby School and many important individuals among his clients, Dr. Thompson, a well-qualified medical practitioner, a Mr. Henderson and three ladies, departed by coach for Scotland, to ascertain the truth of the mysterious manifestations. Only one of the six was a member of Irving's congregation, though all were pious members of the Church of England. Their report was anxiously awaited.

On his return the solicitor for Rugby School was, as might have been expected, emphatic and decided. The unknown tongues were undoubtedly genuine. 'These persons', he added, 'while uttering the unknown sounds, as also while speaking in the spirit in their own language, have every appearance of being under supernatural direction.' The doctor and the three ladies concurred without hesitation.

After the reception of this astonishing news, special prayers were offered in Irving's church that the spiritual gifts apparent in Scotland should be revived among them also. Mary Campbell, who had begun to expound and prophesy before crowded meetings, was brought to London. Several months of further expectancy passed before any other example of the gift was seen, and then, in April 1831, it was vouchsafed to the wife of the solicitor to Rugby School. At a prayer meeting, Mrs. Cardale spoke with great solemnity three distinct sentences in an unknown tongue, and three in intelligible English. Another lady, Miss Hall, was shortly afterwards reported to have 'sung in the spirit'. These occurrences were reported by the Cardales to their minister, who promptly preached a sermon against the supposed spiritual gifts. Thereupon the Cardales seceded to Irving's church. More months went by; when one morning Mr. Oliver Taplin, when about to read the 43rd chapter of Isaiah at a meeting in the vestry room, found himself instead speaking in the unknown tongue. On the three following mornings he was again possessed, though on these occasions he spoke in English, his concluding prophecy being that the Lord, when he came, would not leave a hoof behind. As he possessed a stentorian voice, the effect was electrifying.

At first Irving was able to confine the utterances, which now began to increase in number, to the vestry, but soon they invaded his regular services, to the scandal of many of his more conventional listeners. On one occasion Miss Hall, who has been

mentioned as 'singing in the spirit', left her seat hurriedly and rushed to an anteroom, whence she could be indistinctly heard prophesying by herself. The stentorian Taplin was less restrained, and on one occasion almost created a panic in the church. But though there were many who disapproved, many others were drawn by the report of the gifts, and nearly a thousand persons daily attended the special meetings held at 6.30 in the morning. It was in vain that Mary Campbell's alleged South Sea dialect was pronounced by experts to be no language at all. More and more prophets appeared. It must be admitted that to many, even to sceptical observers, the utterances were moving and deeply impressive, and that Robert Baxter, who became prominent as a testifier but subsequently recanted and grew to regard his own utterances as delusions, nevertheless always claimed that his speeches had been dictated by supernatural impulse.

Such a state of affairs could not last, and in the following year, 1832, the trustees of the church that had been built for Irving, virtually gave him the option of forbidding prophetic utterances during service, or resigning his post. Irving, who firmly believed that the voices were the word of God, could make only one decision. He asked to be permitted to administer Holy Communion for a last time, but on arrival at Regent Square found the gates closed against him. This expulsion had the effect of increasing, not decreasing, the number of his followers. Young and devout men from among that part of the congregation believed with Irving, preached vehemently in the streets that the modern Babylon was doomed, and the coming of the end near at hand. The numbers increased and increased. After an interval Irving moved into a house in Newman Street formerly occupied by Benjamin West the painter, and conducted his services in the large picture gallery, turned into an improvised church. The reports of the first meetings read like pandemonium; even the aristocratic Drummond had by this time become a prophet, and did not scruple to interrupt the preacher with loud adjurations.

So far Irving may fairly be said to have been the leader in the movement that still colloquially bears his name, but the reins of authority were now about to pass from his hands into those of a man with more will, if less inspiration, a man, indeed, who possessed a genius for organization and concealed, tactful

command that was at least as remarkable, in its way, as the oratorical genius of Irving. It has been shown how, on scriptural authority, it was anticipated that the second coming would be preceded by the restoration of spiritual gifts, and the destruction of the established Church. This principle was now extended, though not primarily by Irving. It was held that the way for the second coming was to be prepared by a new set of apostles, that twelve faithful men would be called to service, and that by those men the Church would be restored to a purified state in readiness to welcome the Lord. The first step was taken a fortnight after Irving's expulsion. During one of the Newman Street services a prophet declared that one among their number had been called to be the first apostle. He upon whom the choice had fallen confessed that he also felt the call. Need I say that the chosen man was Mr. Cardale, the solicitor for Rugby School?

Subsequently, by the same process of prophetic sanction, Henry Drummond was called to be pastor of the new church that he was building at Albury Park. As for Irving, fresh clouds and tribulations beset his path. He had been turned away from the church built for him; now his ordination as a priest was assailed on a charge of heresy. It would be idle here to consider the minute point of doctrine that was alleged against him, a mere distinction in theology, not related to the supernatural gifts. Minute though it was, however, it was sufficient, and early in March 1833, Irving was expelled by the Presbytery from the ministry and membership of the established Church of Scotland. After preaching out of doors in various places, he returned to Newman Street, and was ordained by the apostle as the chief angel of the restored Church. It should be explained here that the exiled community of Irving's followers, regarding themselves as cut off from allegiance to all formal religious establishment, had already adopted the nomenclature of the Primitive Church. The recognized offices were: Apostles, possessing the power of ordination; Evangelists, who proclaimed the word abroad; Prophets, who spoke with the Holy Ghost; Angels or Pastors, who ministered to the Faithful, and Deacons or Elders.

From this point onwards the history of the movement that had its origin in Drummond's fantastic prophetic parliament becomes itself a new drama, exhibiting the mind of man in strange and novel aspects, many of them far outside the narrow

definitions of the psycho-analysts of Vienna. But it was a drama in which Irving had little or no part, and which I, unfortunately, cannot fully relate in the limits of the time permitted me. The direction of the growing movement of which Irving had been the impetus fell more and more into the hands of Cardale and the banker Drummond, who was in due course promoted by prophecy from being Angel of Albury to be the second Apostle. Irving could only acquiesce and take secondary place. Even now there was no hesitation in his faith. Carlyle, who regarded him as his best and earliest friend, and indeed as the best man he ever knew, told him plainly what he thought of the new movement, but Irving could not close his eyes to the light as he saw it. Nor, though he earnestly longed and prayed for the call, could he feel within himself the apostolic power.

After a year or so of ministration, Irving was directed to proceed as evangelist to Scotland, to enlighten his native brethren in the new doctrine. Even when he set off he was a broken man. Though only in the early years of middle age, the great preacher was worn out with labour and expectation. For ten years he had lived in convinced anticipation of the millenium, of the return of Christ to his subjects; for ten years he had worn himself out in tremendous sermons or discourses, delivered with all his heart and mind. He had undermined his magnificent constitution by utter carelessness when preaching in bad weather in the open air; he took no care of his body, and spent his physical and mental energy recklessly and without reserve. His letters to his wife during his Scottish journey must have prepared her for the end, which came in Glasgow on 8 December 1834. He was still only forty-two. Carlyle wrote an eloquent epitaph upon his death, in which he reproached London and its vanities for its destruction of a great Scotsman; but perhaps Mrs. Carlyle's verdict was a truer one. Irving had been her tutor in early days at Haddington, and she, like many women, was drawn to the brilliant, handsome giant. 'Poor Irving', she said. 'If he had married me there would have been no gift of tongues.'

I have called my paper 'Edward Irving and his Followers', and it is fitting, therefore, that I should conclude with a very short account of the organization that arose after his death, and is generally called after his name, though not by those who officially hold to the tenets of the self-styled Holy, Catholic and Apostolic

Church. At the time of Irving's death six apostles had felt their call; by the end of 1836 the college was complete. There were now five branches in London; each with a substantial congregation. The chosen twelve, under the leadership of the indomitable solicitor for Rugby School, accomplished very remarkable things. For instance, after two and a half years of retirement, during which each man read the scriptures through from end to end, the apostles separated upon journeys through all the countries of Europe, and even to India, to observe the various forms under which Christianity was practised. On their reassembly, a composite liturgy was evolved, having elements taken from the Roman and Greek services and many features restored from the Primitive Church. This amateur liturgy was a brilliant feat, and has been admired by all who have examined it with knowledge. Vestments and incense became a part of the increasing complexity of their rites, which as time went on departed to the furthest extreme from Irving's Presbyterian simplicity. Many converts were made; at one time the community comprised over forty churches in Great Britain. Cardale directed the foundation and development of what came to be called the twelve-fold unity with astonishing skill, and proved himself one of the ablest dialecticians and organizers of the nineteenth century; his great powers of mind have not been recognized by the world, only because they were exercised in a field that does not command public attention. Those who accepted the doctrines of the restored Apostolate have displayed, from the time of Irving's death to the present day a fervent adhesion to Christian principles far above that of most of the orthodox Christians who regard the Irvingites as a mere sect. The exercise of the gift of tongues was regulated by the apostles and is no longer a prominent part of their proceedings. Every member of the church contributes a tenth of his whole income to it as a matter of course; and it is still a matter of belief with them that the second coming is imminent, and has only been delayed hitherto because of the unresponsiveness of the world to the tidings given to it by the apostles. In course of time a magnificent cathedral was built for it in Gordon Square, which remains its headquarters.

Most remarkable of all is the present situation. The last apostle died thirty years ago. Believing, as the Irvingites do, in the necessity of Apostolic ordination for their ministers, the church is

necessarily faced with certain extinction by the very form of its construction. No more Angels can be ordained; and very few survive to execute their duties. What will happen when the last survivor dies cannot be foreseen; and the worshippers, confident that a Heavenly inspiration approves them, are content to trust the future to God.

GEORGINA DIX AMERICAN CONVERSATION PIECE

'Do you really feel the past to be as negligible as all that?' I asked my host Oliver Brant with whom I was sitting at a restaurant table. A business friend of my husband and an occasional visitor to London, he had offered to show me the way about Washington. Inevitably our talk had revolved round the war and, rather to my horror, I found Mr. Brant speaking as if the destruction of the cultural monuments in Europe did not matter.

'Perhaps negligible is not the right word, but we've extracted all we want out of European culture and frankly we don't mind what happens to it. It's fairly depleted of meaning for most of us. You can't tell me, Mrs. Rimington, that ghosts are stimulating company.'

'I've never thought ghosts anything but scaring myself, but when you use the word "ghost", Mr. Brant, you mean something quite different from what I mean, something that has not much to do with spectres, something that includes our great men *and* our historic background. Isn't that right?'

'Up to a point, yes. What I mean by ghosts is the sort of thing that got Nathaniel Hawthorne down. He vowed he smelt corruption oozing through the flagstones of every village church. He came to hate the English cult for monuments.'

'Or what he called monuments,' I riposted. 'You mean that for him every English castle and cathedral was infested, "infested" was I think his word, with ghosts: But I seem to remember that before ever he set foot in England, he wrote some rather

soppy, picturesque pages about an old rectory in Massachusetts. Why Dickens brought *Mosses from an Old Manse* back from his first American trip and pushed it into John Forster's hands as a delightfully English book. Even Hawthorne had his Henry James moments, you must admit.'

'Just as I've had my Pearsall Smith moments.' We both laughed at each other's wit, and Mr. Brant went on: 'It's all very well, Mrs. Rimington, but once Hawthorne had settled in Liverpool, love of moss and all that evaporated pretty quickly. We all feel the same way about moss, we don't want to grow any.'

I smiled at this point and said 'So you prefer to be the rolling stone of proverbial philosophy!'

Mr. Brant saw no joke in this and replied rather dubiously, 'I suppose we do'.

'But what about your great moss collectors, Frick, Mellon, Mrs. Gardner, for example? They thought themselves fortunate to accumulate so much of it!'

'Collectors are different; they are demon driven, but even collectors are less active now. I guess we've collected all we want. There was no great rush for the Hearst antiques when he threw them on the market a while ago. We've had our fill of antiques.'

'But you must tell me, Mr. Brant,' I said rather desperately, 'whether you really and truly believe that we should bury the past in its entirety, and face up exclusively to the present.'

'Well, dwelling on the past just doesn't seem worth while to me, it takes up a lot of time that could be better employed.'

'Surely, surely, there must be some middle way,' I ventured, feeling no certainty that a common denominator was anywhere to be found.

'I don't think there is,' replied Mr. Brant firmly. 'You just live in the present, or you live in the past. You can't do both at once. At least you can't in America, I'm sure of that. Either you are an American at heart, or you aren't.'

'I wonder. I don't feel a bit like that! The past really enriches us as human beings and throws light on the present. Isn't it Bergson who says that without memory a man becomes depersonalized? Why even birds and animals have an ancestral memory.'

'Don't you mean instinct, Mrs. Rimington?'

'No, I don't, Mr. Brant. Swallows come back to the same eaves, and that's not instinct, but memory.'

'And some Americans have a feeling for the old home. Look what sentiment drove Henry James to do—become the subject of a king!'

'And look at Pearsall Smith who remains a republican and whom the discerning regard as the greatest literary pundit in London! To us he remains intensely American and yet embodies the very soul of English culture.'

'Pearsall Smith is certainly a wonderful example of a great writer preserving his native integrity in an ancestral atmosphere. I've always heard that he fell in love with England at Oxford and has been her lover ever since. He endured the blitz for her dear sake. Heroic it seems to me.'

'I believe I could fall in love with America, Mr. Brant. Think! I've only been in Washington two days, and already I've been taken out to Mount Vernon, walked over the fields on which Bull Run was fought and wandered round that lovely place, Dumbarton Oaks. Isn't that enough to make one fall head over ears in love with America?'

'Or confirm one's love for England? You see, you have been with what you would class as cultivated people—people anxious to make you feel at home. Remember that even in Russia they would show you a palace or two in spite of the fact that their real pride lies in their power generators, auto-ways and workers' flats. We are very proud of our generally good life and we think we've achieved it by scrapping the past. We don't want to have anything to do with dead hands.'

'Mortmain? A depressing, ugly word!'

'And a depressing, ugly thing when it is laid on lands and houses and legislation and holds up all planning and progress.'

'Do you really think the dead hand as heavy as that in England? We thought the war had broken down most barriers and that we were progressing after our fashion.'

'You mustn't mind me, Mrs. Rimington, perhaps I'm prejudiced,' and then as if to placate one he added, 'Even here we have our monuments, as you have found out, but we don't say much about them. The fact, however, remains that we are only happy in new buildings and that no one ever wishes to inhabit an ancestral house. Not that there are no ancestral houses about. I could show you one tomorrow.'

'Could you? I should be terribly pleased to see it. America at

first seemed to me a jumble of towering buildings, neon lights, traffic blocks, drugstores, and restless, standardized people, at least that was my impression of New York and Chicago. The country I've travelled through doesn't seem a bit like English country. The trees you call forests look like a jungle of decaying spillikins, the houses have their mounds of scrapped tins alongside of them, and fields are often strewn with disused motor cars. America is a very untidy country. Talk of junk!

'That's the result, Mrs. Rimington, of living right up to date. We must change our automobiles all the time, and our radio sets. I agree there's a lot of junk in our modern life, almost as much as in your old-fashioned life.'

'And how does this passion for newness affect the books you read? Do you only read new books?'

'We all read old books at college, but afterwards for the most part content ourselves with newspapers and Sunday supplements, and then there are some pretty good magazines. We don't want to keep *anything*. I can't say it too often. It takes some getting used to, I suppose, if you have always lived in Europe and hoarded everything that belonged to your great-grandmother.'

'But it does give one a cosy feeling, you know, to have things about that belonged to your forebears!'

'I don't know that we ever want to feel cosy. We like being warm and we like being clean, and we like light, but we don't want to be cosy in the English sense.'

'Well, what about the ancestral house you were talking about. Did you really mean you would show it to me? Who does it belong to?'

'It belongs to an elderly woman who has little interest in current affairs like wars or presidential elections. She tolerates a few visitors, though she does not encourage them.'

'Does she mind seeing English people?'

'Not more than she minds anyone else of the present day. She keeps company that will surprise you. I have to see her from time to time, she's one of my clients.'

The dinner had almost come to an end, and as we lingered over our coffee we made plans for this excursion. On the first fine day we would go and visit an American living in an ancestral house.

As I turned on the chromium-plated taps in my bathroom that evening, I went over the talk I had had with Mr. Brant. There he

was, a typical well-to-do American lawyer who had travelled in Europe and had developed a contempt for what Europe produced. It was lucky, in a way, that I was going to be shown an old house by a person with his opinions, for at least I should get the American slant on tradition.

In the morning he called me on the telephone and suggested that, as the sun was shining, he should come and fetch me that very afternoon. The house was not far away and the trip would not take long. I jumped at the offer and when the moment came, settled myself in a low automobile which glided clear of city streets on to a ribbon road the length of which it devoured with great rapidity. Suddenly we switched off the wide pike on to a soft road—what Mr. Brant called ‘one of the thousand dirt tracks of Maryland’. As we cushioned over culverts and ruts, he began to chuckle and said, ‘This is where ancestral America begins!’

On either side of the road were shacks bleached ash-colour by winds and rain, waste spaces, straggling coverts, coloured folk scything weeds or meandering behind mule-ploughs. Children played among the straggling peach trees under which long-shanked pigs were rooting. ‘This is a kind of Eden, you know,’ observed Mr. Brant half-humorously. I wondered what he meant and replied, ‘Things do look rather pre-diluvian hereabouts.’

‘I guess you’re wrong there,’ he said, with a drawl, ‘these people rear chickens, corn and pigs, and exchange them for records and wireless sets. They seem to lead a primitive life but they are modern in their own way. Of course you realize that they are part of our ancestral outfit. They are the descendants of slaves, and you know who brought slaves to America.’

Presently the automobile nosed its way through two gateposts of stone and took us past the shores of a lake fringed by birch trees. Daffodils sprinkled the grass and white violets the coppice.

My ears were assailed by a concourse of whistling frogs. As we halted to listen, a dark woodman stepped forward and in the friendliest way explained the chorus: ‘Dat is de frogs singing because de spring am here’. From the lakeside an avenue slanted upwards and, as we breasted its slope, a rose-brick house disclosed itself to view. The façade was divided horizontally by two white-columned galleries in what Mr. Brant said was the southern fashion. The columns were muffled with ivy—branched ivy. Before the door was a carriage sweep designed for horse-drawn

vehicles, which allowed little turning-space for an automobile. In the centre of the sweep stood a withered pine surrounded by a high cuff of box hedging. It reminded me of a perishing bone set in a reliquary. So I really had been brought to the entrance of an ancestral dwelling! The house struck me as being most unusually sited. It almost appeared to be lop-sided, for on the left the ground fell away so steeply that the windows looked out on to a chasm, while to the right lay gentle terraces leading to plantations.

Mr. Brant rang the bell hanging by the front door and the coloured girl who answered it smiled a welcome. 'Do you think it would be convenient, Amanda, to show this English lady the house?' Perhaps Mrs. Dowton was at home? Amanda did not know, but invited us to come inside while she went to seek for her. We were ushered into a long panelled room furnished with walnut cabinets and chairs and blue porcelain. 'What a charming room!' I exclaimed, and then pushed by I do not know what impulse, I walked to the end of it and straight out of the open french windows. On the gravel path I found myself face to face with a mouse-like little lady. Feeling for a moment as if I had committed an indiscretion, I stepped backwards, but the pale blue eyes, the serene expression and a rather impersonal handshake restored my self-confidence. Mr. Brant had followed me and began to explain the reason of his visit. This gave me the chance of looking at Mrs. Dowton in her grey two-piece suit, grey stockings and, as it seemed, duffle shoes. Her grey hair was neatly done and showed the traces of a permanent wave. 'Typically Henry James', I decided, and then allowed my eyes to stray away from her to the line of woodland. Could those massy high trees really be elms? Hardly had I formulated this query in my consciousness when a voice, Mrs. Dowton's voice, of course, said in answer to my thought, 'That is a clump of ancient tulip trees!' 'Tulip trees?' I echoed, 'I didn't know tulip trees grew as large as that. I've only seen them in old-fashioned gardens in England and there they are about the size of mulberry trees.'

Mrs. Dowton's tones were quiet and level. It might have been an automaton discoursing. 'Yes, ancient tulip trees. The clump marks the burial place of the fourth Lord Baltimore. No other monument was raised to him. In those old days it was not safe to place a stone upon a grave lest the Red Indians came to take the corpse away.'

'Mrs. Dowton,' I heard Mr. Brant saying, 'I promised Mrs. Rimington to show her at least one of our ancestral houses. She is much interested in the past, and I knew you would not mind the invasion.' Mrs. Dowton required no prompting from Mr. Brant, she seemed to divine why we were there and, as she led us slowly forward over the short turf, began to talk about the place. 'These grass terraces were designed by Major L'Enfant. Once on a while they were level and mown, but now even our secret passage is beginning to fall in,' and as she spoke she stamped her foot in a small depression. 'This passage led down to the river bank, the place where the English soldiers landed, the English soldiers who burned Washington.' I felt that Mr. Brant's eyes were fixed on my face to see what I was going to make out of that. I did not have to make anything out of it, however, for I saw Amanda running to sound a bell suspended from a gallows near the door. It rang out in low, sweet notes, and Mrs. Dowton observed quietly, 'That was the bell used to summon slaves in former days. It always seems to me that the old plantation bells sing more melodiously than church bell has ever sung.'

Shepherding, almost willing us back into the house, Mrs. Dowton brought us to a kind of sitting-room hall, with a staircase leading up from it to another storey. A tea-table was set there and it was indicated by a gesture that we should sit down at it while Mrs. Dowton drifted quietly out of the room. Close to my chair were a number of small volumes stuffed sideways into a bookcase. 'You don't think Mrs. Dowton will mind, do you, Mr. Brant?' I asked as I pulled out two of the little tomes to read their labels. *Tales of the Canongate*, by the Author of Waverley, an early American edition, pirated of course. Replacing these, I fingered some rather podgy books in worn sheepskin bindings, editions of Ovid and Tibullus. 'Ancestral culture,' murmured Mr. Brant quizzically, as I replaced them on their shelf and turned my eyes to the window greenhouse, bright with coral-coloured pentstemons. 'But why a rubber plant on the writing table?' I asked my companion. 'It's not a very decorative plant.' 'Takes the place of the aspidistra in England!' replied Mr. Brant. 'You find it in these old-fashioned houses.' He rose and pinched the leaves meditatively. Why was he so unwilling to talk? Why did I feel so inhibited? What was wrong with our visit? Why should I feel nervously apprehensive?

Presently Mrs. Dowton returned carrying a silver teapot, followed by Amanda with a tray. Inspired by the wish to break the ice of our hostess's aloofness, I asked whether she had spent the whole winter in the country. 'I have lived here for several winters, as Mr. Brant has reason to know. I find Paris has less to offer me. There is rarer company here than in Europe.' Mr. Brant made no comment; it was up to me to carry on as best I could. Something warned me that I was about to hear Mrs. Dowton's story. 'Is there not an unusual quality, or should I say atmosphere, about this place?' I began, 'I don't know but it seems to remind me of an old house very far away from here that is filled with indefinable presences.' Mr. Brant lit a cigarette and stretched out his legs, as if to listen, 'Or am I being tiresome and foolish, Mrs. Dowton?' Sheer nervousness made me add 'I wonder, do you feel that way about it?'

Focusing her pale eyes on mine, Mrs. Dowton looked at me intently. At last I had succeeded in attracting her attention, for she said, 'Do you understand, do you care?' I nodded in reply, I was afraid of saying the wrong thing. Slowly, almost as if talking to herself, she uttered these words, 'Yes, there are presences here, there are always presences here, but I am not always in touch with them. Mrs. Rimington, if you were to sit alone with me here in the evenings, you would hear footsteps coming down those stairs, marching over the kitchen flagstones and out into the cobbled yard. I do not know whose steps they are.'

Becoming more inwardly attuned to Mrs. Dowton's mood, I said very quietly, 'But there are some you do know, some you have identified, some you have actually seen?'

'Yes, I have identified some of them, I have seen some of them. All are unhappy, all need help, and that is why I live here.'

'Why are they unhappy?'

'They are unhappy because the English murdered them. They all died when the redcoats took this house. It was at that time the home of Lord Baltimore. Miss Diggs, his housekeeper, poor, scared Miss Diggs, she who buried the silver to save it from being looted, wanders over the house seeking where she has laid it. She met her death just there by the door, a stray bullet struck her. I can do nothing for Miss Diggs, poor Miss Diggs.' Mrs. Dowton's hands were clasped as she rocked herself slightly forwards and then again backwards.

'And there are others you know by name?' I asked, longing to hear more.

'No, no one by name, but there is a girl who signals with a candle from an upper window. Three times does she wave it across the window, and once up and down. Maybe she was warning her lover of the approach of the redcoats, or maybe she was trying to let our American scouts know that the English were holding the house. I simply don't know.'

'But you have seen the light yourself, Mrs. Dowton?'

'I have seen it, and lately some children playing in the garden called me to come and look at the pretty, wavy light moving in the window. Yes, I have seen it more than once.'

Of a sudden I became acutely conscious of Mr. Brant, who was fidgeting his feet and giving me pointed looks. It was obvious he wanted me to make a move. Making some conventional excuse about twilight and getting back before dark, I rose to my feet. Mrs. Dowton unclasped her hands, stood up, but made no motion to detain us. In her toneless voice she inquired by which door I had first entered the house. 'If you leave by the same way, we may meet again, if by the other, we shall never meet again.'

Rather guiltily, I remembered how soon after coming in by the front door I had stepped out of the french windows. So we were never to meet again. As we stood for a moment on the gravel sweep I glanced at the withered tree in its box cuff and heard Mrs. Dowton's quiet voice explaining that the pine had been planted by General Lafayette when he came over to fight for us. 'Sere and sapless though it be, we shall always cherish it for his dear sake.'

As the automobile slipped towards the avenue I waved farewell to a lonely figure, who made no gesture in reply.

'I hope I've convinced you, Mrs. Rimington, that living in an ancestral house cannot be called the American way of life,' said Mr. Brant, as he pressed the accelerator.

'It's been a wonderful experience, and how can I ever thank you? I think I begin to see why it is that Americans prefer to live in the present, and cannot really live in the past. It makes a great gulf between us, Mr. Brant. How do you think it can be bridged?'

'I don't know,' said Mr. Brant. 'Only Pearsall Smith can tell you that.'

DANIEL HENRY KAHNWEILER

THE STATE OF PAINTING IN PARIS

1945 ASSESSMENT

WHEN the German flood tide receded from Paris, the town which for a century had been the focal point of western European art, all those whose passion is for the plastic arts, and who had been absent from the centre for four years, began to ask themselves whether there were any new names worthy of addition to that brilliant array of artists known as 'The School of Paris', whose oldest members are well advanced in years and whose youngest are already middle-aged. The Paris Press would have had us believe that the existence of a younger generation was no longer in doubt. From the pen of almost every critic flowed a list of a dozen or so painters (names only casually—if at all—known before the war) whom he considered to be worthy successors of the preceding line of masters. Strangely enough not one critic ever singled out two or three of them for special attention as being the greatest or the leaders of the band; all twelve were generally classed together and accorded the same amount of praise. Yet the sudden florescence of ten or a dozen important painters all at once might have seemed somewhat excessive even for France, more especially as they were nearly all born around 1900 and were therefore of the same generation as several who were known and recognized before the war.

To my knowledge, many people who have come to Paris have been disappointed by the work of the painters extolled by the Paris Press. I admit that I share their disappointment. In my opinion these painters—who represent widely differing degrees of talent, importance and seriousness—are concerned, broadly speaking, only with continuing *certain aspects* of Fauvism and Cubism, or possibly with attempting the impossible union of the two. Of most of them one can only say, alas, that their work is an attempt at popularization; an unconscious attempt I feel sure, but nevertheless one which has evidently been successful, at least as far as the critics are concerned. I am no prophet and I do

not pretend to know what the great painters for whom we are all waiting will offer us; however, they will certainly not be concerned with the popularisation of either already existing tendencies or, *a fortiori*, the external appearance of the works in which they are expressed. I do not wish to imply that the next generation of painters will break the chain of European tradition of which Cubism and Fauvism have already become a part. Far from it; I believe that, having studied these two movements, they will continue the chain by forging a new link to join on to the post-Cubist painting of the years 1920-40.

I will now summarize in a few lines, and as concisely as possible, the tendencies which have appeared since 1900 in the Paris school of European painting. I need hardly add that, of necessity, it can be no more than a very rough outline.

Gauguin's lead, with all that was implicit in his unfortunate weakness for 'decoration' and hedonistic arrangements, was followed by Matisse, who brought to the task his magnificent painter's gift. He it was who headed the Fauves; but the majority of those around him represented a more final, though supreme, blaze of Impressionism, 'the painting of light', along the stirring lines of Van Gogh. Thus their painting was the end of one cycle of evolution and not the beginning of a new one.

Cézanne's lead stimulated the Cubist painters to come to grips with objects, but it taught them also to care for the unity and autonomous existence of the works which were the fruits of this struggle. At first they attempted to inform the spectator by presenting several simultaneous views of an object (Analytical Cubism), then they decided to invent signs (or 'symbols') to *signify* these objects, without any thought for illusionist representation (Synthetic Cubism). Indeed, after 1910 they set down what they knew about an object and not what was optically discernible from any one point. Of Braque, Gris, Léger and Picasso it is true to say (as it is of any genuine artist) that the appearance of their pictures is the outcome of certain preoccupations resulting from their conception of the world and which only became consciously active in their plastic creations. Nothing was arbitrary; not even the choice of a particular aspect was free. Their pictures were the result of their own behaviour when faced with the basic problems of human existence; and their behaviour was conditioned by the spirit of the times.

The same cannot be said of what, by some people, is called 'abstract art', but which is now referred to by its enthusiasts as 'concrete art'. The artists who practise this may claim a descent from Cubism, but they have not seen beyond the outward appearance of their masters' works. They simply copied this outward appearance without for a moment realizing that the forms in Cubist paintings have meaning only as calligraphic signs designed (like any other form of plastic notation) to communicate to others the emotions produced in their creators by one or more visual experiences. As a result of their failure to understand the nature of painting, these 'abstract' pseudo-painters have not recorded for others a plastic 'experience', they have merely performed the functions of decorators, tastefully ornamenting flat surfaces.

Some of these pseudo-painters were contemporaries of the Cubists and were born around 1880, while some are almost twenty years younger. There were, however, other painters born about the same time, who grew up like the 'abstract' ones in the atmosphere of Cubism, but who saw beyond its outward appearance. They understood its significance, but felt the need to express certain things which, rightly or wrongly, seemed to them absent in Cubist pictures.¹ These painters, one might say, reproached the great Cubist constructions with a lack of content; in their eyes, Cubism concerned itself only with the appearance of things and overlooked their properties, their substance. Such painters aimed at expressing life in its entirety. Readers who are familiar with the philosophical currents of our time will probably have recognized their aspirations as existentialist.²

The Surrealists must, undoubtedly, be allotted a place of their own, but it would be wrong, in my opinion, not to class them too as existentialists. For the only difference between them and the others is their passion for mysteries and dreams, a passion which brings them close to the German Romantics. Much has been heard of the influence of Freud on Surrealism, but this has only

¹ It is not my intention to express approval or disapproval of any particular idea or attitude, but simply to give a historical summary. In any case, every generation is right in its day.

² I hasten to add that these painters were, at any rate at the start, ignorant of the writings of Heidegger, Jaspers, etc. The French school of existentialists did not then exist.

made itself felt *a posteriori*, and not always for the best. It provided a psychological vocabulary which is already out of date. The tiresome idiosyncracies of some of the Surrealists (their taste for the 'convulsive' and their cult of the bizarre), the spirit of scandal for scandal's sake (so foreign to the Cubists) and the secret society airs which pervade the whole 'movement', with its official praise lavished on some and anathema hurled at others, must not be allowed to blind us to the fact that, as part of their legacy from the Dadaists, the Surrealists have always insisted on spontaneity, truth and an end of all those 'artistic' tricks by which the truth is distorted. In other words, they have been opposed to any sort of decorative arrangement in a painting and have tried to say everything without flummery. And this is the spirit of existentialism.

The whole generation of painters born around 1900, and not only the Surrealists,¹ discovered in Paul Klee a master who possessed exactly those qualities which they looked for in vain in the work of the Cubists. For Klee allowed his inspired fantasy a free rein at a time when the Cubists sought salvation in rigorous mental discipline.

Thus, in 1940 there were on the one hand Matisse and the surviving Cubists, and on the other their successors the 'existentialists' (among whom I include the two Surrealist painters who really count), artists who were all concerned with enlarging the conception of painting handed down by the Cubists to include the maximum of sense data, of images and of ideas. This is exactly what the painters discovered by the Parisian critics since 1940 are not concerned with. They are not of today and are busy copying the outward appearance of works produced during the preceding era of artistic evolution. The return to Bonnard which occurred during the war is, in this connection, highly significant. Those who follow the trail of Matisse—and they are by far the most numerous—have adapted the nervous line and subtle harmonies of their master to make garish posters or academic designs in flashy colours. Those who have hitched themselves to Cubism—and they are chiefly followers of Picasso—are behaving differently from the first group of pasticheurs, the 'abstractionists'. The 'abstract' artists transformed the Cubist

¹ It should be clear that I do not consider as Surrealists, nor even as painters, those academic practitioners who devote themselves to producing works of a laborious eccentricity.

'symbols' into geometrical forms and thereby deprived them of all significance. The new generation, however, preserves their symbolical character but takes them over ready-made. There is no attempt to invent a new set of 'symbols' to correspond to their own 'experiences', which is the essence of true painting. To be precise, the effect of what I describe as their misconception has been to purge the Cubist calligraphy of anything capable of shocking the great public. For they do not for a moment share the Cubist painters' preoccupation with either the representation of volume or the construction of the picture, and above all not with painting as an intellectual pursuit. Their painting has, therefore, become simultaneously acceptable and even pleasing to the great public; the average man was not so much shocked by the appearance of a picture by Picasso as by the fact that it represented a woman. What infuriated the public was the fact of expressing 'a woman' thus. If popularization is a passport to historical fame, then a place will be found for these new painters, though I do not for a moment believe that it is likely.

In my opinion, no painter of importance has appeared on the scene since 1940. It may be that I am already too old to spot the great new painter. It may even be that he is already with us and that I have seen his pictures without recognizing them. At all events, if no new generation of painters (and they should have been born around 1920) is visible, we must ask ourselves how this dearth can be explained and what conclusions are to be drawn from it. Some people, in their impatience, talk of a decline in French art going hand in hand with what they term the country's political decline. It is frequently true that artistic and political supremacy go together. For example, art in Siena did not survive the fall of the city-republic, and at a later stage of history the same fate overtook Venetian art. The political and artistic decline of Holland occurred simultaneously at the end of the seventeenth century; Spain's art waned with the loss of her empire. Yet art does not suddenly come to an end, as the present prophets of misfortune would have us believe; it declines slowly, not as a direct result of political catastrophe, but frequently in advance of it and in company with other warning signs. I am firmly convinced, however, that the present political eclipse of France will not last long. If one has lived through the inspiring experience of the 'resistance' in France—in almost every town and village

traces are still visible of the heroic struggle of the F.F.I. against the invader—and if one is aware of its innumerable victims (many of whom died unidentified in prison yards), then one cannot despair of the rebirth of a nation which has been able to triumph over its unworthy leaders and find its soul.

To return, however, to the world of art. The blood-baths of 1914-18 and 1939-45 certainly cost the life of more than one young painter, but I am sure that France is fertile enough to produce a new strain. As a matter of fact, those periods which are the most eventful and war-ridden have not on the whole been the richest in great works of art. The French Revolution and the Empire are often quoted as examples. Besides, for the period 1939-45 one must deduct from the number of potentially worth-while painters all those who were among the hordes of prisoners and deportees, those who were connected with the 'Maquis' and those who escaped overseas to join the forces of Fighting France.

It has also been suggested that the centre of artistic creation has shifted—the painters who have remained in France are left out of account—and that New York has become a modern Alexandria, an international metropolis of the arts. True, many a painter has sought refuge in America, but so numerous are those who have written to me bewailing their exile (not all of them Frenchmen even) and begging me to hasten their return, that I have not a moment's doubt about the attraction which Paris still holds for them.

Let us now for the moment imagine some unknown young man in France who feels himself called to be a painter. In order to be a painter he must paint, since painting is a profession which can only be mastered by ceaseless labour. If our young man is the son of rich parents who are disposed to favour his vocation, then all will be well. It is, however, difficult to believe that this will often be the case. With few exceptions—Delacroix and Manet, for example—the great French painters of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have all come from the middle and lower middle classes. This is a fact which I will not attempt to explain. As for a working-class young man, it is easy to see that if he is pushed into a factory immediately on leaving school he will probably never have a chance of becoming a painter; and the same applies to children of the peasantry. At the very best the

worker or the peasant will become a 'Sunday painter', of which (significantly) there are so many in France.

Inevitably a young man of the lower middle class will suffer the same fate as the young proletarian or the young peasant unless his parents insist on giving him a secondary education. But this is generally the case in French families of the petty bourgeoisie. And therefore there comes a day when the young man senses his vocation. Most probably the result is a battle with his parents, who have decided on a career which, according to their ideas, holds out more secure prospects. The young man defies them and is cut off without a penny—it has happened to so many artists. But even if his family is well disposed to the idea of his becoming a painter, they will not be able in present circumstances to finance him for several years. During the last hundred years, the majority of painters (Picasso and Gris will serve as examples) have found themselves in this situation. Yet their early life and development was not on that account blighted. Times were good, money had a fixed value and, contrary to general belief, collectors paid higher prices (by comparison with the cost of living) than they do today. Moreover, it was easy to get credit from the wine shop, the grocer and the colour salesman; nor did the landlord press too hard for his rent. Even the sale of a drawing meant that the artist had enough to live on for a few weeks; for the cost of artists' materials was very low. I well recall a story which Max Jacob, that penniless and great figure who was one of the victims of German brutality at Drancy in March 1944, used to tell in about 1905. Max had taken a cousin of his called Gompel, the Director General of the Association of French Chain-Stores, to visit Picasso, who asked fifty francs for a drawing. Gompel looked around the studio and his glance took in the number of drawings visible, whereupon he exclaimed, 'My goodness, you are rich'. At the time we laughed a great deal at the remark because Picasso was very poor; but actually it shows that Gompel had a very acute business sense. For the drawings really did represent a goodly quantity of beefsteaks, of pounds of bread and of litres of wine. There may not have been many collectors willing to buy them—which explains our laughter—but at any rate, whenever one was sold, and especially if it was a picture (which meant far more money), the proceeds were enormous in terms of Picasso's daily needs.

But to come back to our unknown young man of today who has decided that he has enough courage to face the risk. We will suppose that he has somewhere to live, for unless he has he will hardly be able to find a room—let alone a studio—in the whole of Paris. And yet his work is only likely to bear fruit in Paris. How will he pay for his room nowadays? With a few francs in hand his predecessors could draw, paint and manage to scrape an existence provided they could sell a few drawings or paintings cheaply. (According to his sister Antonieta, Gris arrived in Paris in 1906 with only 16 francs in his pocket.) But, in order to do his painting and drawing our young man will have to buy paper, pencils, brushes, canvas, paints and turpentine—none of which are available today. They can be found, of course, on the black market, where he must either pay ridiculous prices or be prepared to give in exchange the parcels of farm produce which his friends or fellow-painters send him from the country. How will he set about acquiring the materials which are indispensable for learning his trade? Admittedly, there is in existence an Artists' Mutual Aid Society which does what it can—and that is not very much—about the issue of vouchers to impoverished artists to enable them to purchase certain essential things at normal prices. But, in its legitimate desire to cut out the amateurs, this Society insists on the fulfilment of a number of conditions (study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, membership of recognized Salons, etc.) which cannot be met by our imaginary young man. For I cannot imagine him, any more than his elders, as a pupil of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. I see him rather as the product of some independent art school. And as for membership of a recognized Salon—that is only granted after one's pictures have been hung there for a number of years. In passing, I might add here that this is a typical example of the 'corporate spirit' so dear to the Government of Vichy, whose defence of the bourgeoisie being modelled on pre-revolutionary lines encouraged the principle of recruitment by co-option for all professions.

Let us therefore suppose too that, by some stroke of good fortune, our young man is endowed with a small nest-egg which enables him to find lodging, to buy materials and to live and work for a while unaided. Let us even suppose that he is able to sell a few of his works. We must then ask ourselves what sort of sums he will receive while he is still unknown? Certainly they

will not be sufficient to enable him to live by the fruits of his labours. I am, therefore, convinced that there are at present in France large numbers of potential young painters who are earning their living as salesmen in the Galeries Lafayette, as lawyers' clerks, or as employees in banks and who are bored to death because they are free to paint only on Sundays—even if they are able to buy enough materials to do that. Of these, the less educated will end perhaps by swelling the ranks of 'popular' painters, while others may achieve the distinction of being represented at some Salon or other by a few deplorable canvases painted with a laboriously studied, meretricious brilliance. Inevitably, they will turn out pastiches of one or other of the fashionable painters; yet it is my fond hope that some of these young men may be the real thing and that, having triumphed over all the obstacles, they will ultimately reveal themselves as true artists.

I have no doubt that, after a short though unmistakable lapse of time (and what are thirty years in the life of a nation?), there will be born in Paris a new race of great painters—they may or may not be Frenchmen—whose masterpieces will be decisive in shaping for the rising generation their conception of the outside world. It must nevertheless be admitted that it is a strange form of social order which makes it impossible for an artist to practise his real profession and which, by forcing him to adopt another, so clips the wings of his genius as to hinder the creation of those works of art by which the culture of our time will be handed on to posterity.

[*Translated by* DOUGLAS COOPER]

FROM THE FRENCH PROVINCES

I—WHAT OF FRANCE?

HUMPHREY HARE

Dear HORIZON Reader,

Am I to write about France to you who know it so well? You must expect nothing from me on the grand political scale; expect no comment from me—indeed, how much better the French do it themselves!—on the relations of de Gaulle to his ministers, on Palewski to de Gaulle, no prophecies as to the results of the elections or the future constitution of France. I can only reflect the conversation of my French friends which is, to some extent, typified in the recent headline in *Le Canard Enchaîné*—‘M. Palewski vient d’arriver à Washington accompagné par le Général de Gaulle’. But indeed, I can only write personally and hope that from my loose and sentimental ramblings you may be able to formulate for yourself some picture of France—of the Midi in particular, which for so long has been so dear to us both.

Do you remember the approach? How the road in great wide turns like a skein of wool in disarray sweeps down from la Gineste to the sea? And the last corner turned, the little *Place*, the old women dressed in black sitting on the benches under the planes—their hands idle now for lack of thread—and the young boys chattering by the moss-grown fountain? I drove slowly by; but no one made a sign of recognition. Only one or two of the boys looked incuriously, unshyly at the jeep. I could almost hear them: *Un de ces salauds d’Américains*. But la Réserve was different. At least there was no lack of warmth in the welcome there. André stooping emaciated behind the bar, was still thinner now, paler and finer drawn: Madame, who always reminded me of a plump love-bird, obviously had had no difficulty these last years in the lacing of her stays. ‘Ah, Monsieur l’Anglais!’ they cried and there was much hand-shaking. A drink was called for and André with a despairing shrug towards his empty shelves suggested wine or marc, and, as he filled our glasses and we drank, talked of the old

days, the suppers we had comfortably eaten behind the shut doors when the café was closed for the night, the wines we had drunk and of those who had been there. Jean?—In the army: died in a German prison camp. Pierrot?—Dead: in the navy. How?—Mers el Kebir. But I must not think there was any bitterness. *Mais non, du tout, du tout.* It was those *sales Boches* and, of course, *Vichy—qui n'ont rien compris.* But there was Georges—Pierrot's young brother—on the other side of the street. He would call him over and he could tell me himself how little they blamed the English for that terrible misfortune.

I said that I must leave them as I had but little time to spare, that I must take a walk round the harbour before I left and that my American driver was waiting for me—bored, I privately felt certain, in what I was sure he would call 'a one-horse burg'. Georges offered to accompany me. But Madame André insisted on our having another drink. Besides, she said, for old times' sake Georges must put a record on the 'pick-up'. It was rarely used nowadays. With an unsurpassed certainty of selection '*J'attendrai le jour et la nuit . . .*' came hoarse and cracked from the loud-speaker. Yes, said André, it was the same disc. Did I not remember that night and Pierrot throwing a glass at the gramophone? Everyone had been very gay. For a moment Tino Rossi's tenuous nostalgia triumphed.

Georges and I went out to the *boule* ground, too uneven now for play and shadeless since the Germans had felled the trees to improve their field of fire. I did not remember Georges very well except as Pierrot's young brother. He must have been one of the ten-year-olds in shorts in those days, going to school with his black serviette and whose voice one heard chanting lessons in chorus through its windows. No, he said now, do not think we are bitter. These things happen. Pierrot often spoke of you. Look he said; and from his pocket he took a battered wallet and out of it a photograph. I remembered the day. Three of us had taken a boat to the Calanques and on the way had stopped to bathe. There we were, Pierrot and I, all dripping from the sea, sitting in the stern, the helm between us, against a background of cliffs, laughing wide-mouthed—at what? Georges wanted to know. I have often wondered, he said, what you were both laughing at. It must have been something very special for you both to laugh like that. I don't know, I said, I think we both

laughed a lot in those days; I expect Pierrot had just told me a dirty story. Yes, said Georges, I'd thought of that. I would very much like to hear it; do you think it may one day recur to you?

The harbour looked strangely empty, no yachts there now or pleasure craft and the fishing-boats were fewer in number and needed a coat of paint as badly as the houses that lined the quay. These last seemed to have faded to a uniform grey with peeling plaster and shutters hung awry. Across the mouth of the harbour two ships—I suppose of two or three thousand tons apiece—had been sunk by the Germans. They lay at strange angles fast on the rocks, their masts and funnels quartering the sky, their bulk enormous beside the little Port and the toy lighthouse at the end of the mole.

On the quay we met Père Moraud. He greeted me without surprise. I said it was a long time. Some times were long, he said, and some times were short, but it didn't seem to make much difference these days. I asked, how was fishing? He could just get out of the harbour in his boat between the sunken ships when the weather was fine, he said, but there was nothing in it. I said the village must need the fish badly. He said yes it did but it didn't get any from him. He said he sold his fish on the *marché noir* in Marseilles because otherwise he couldn't raise enough money to buy the black market petrol which alone permitted him to fish at all. Besides there was the question of nets—they cost a bit these days. And he wanted his son back from Germany to help him. It is true, said Georges, when we want fish we go out in a rowboat and catch enough for ourselves. There is also bread, but little else; some vegetables, but there are seven thousand mines in the gardens and the German prisoners have only begun to lift them. But what about the meat, the butter, the oil? I asked. I know the ration is small . . . I do not complain of its size, said Père Moraud. I complain merely that it does not exist. My wife goes to old Fabre for the meat and every day it is the same story: it has not yet come in but will surely be there by tomorrow morning. And everywhere else it is the same. Either it has gone to Lyons or it has gone to Paris or the army is eating it—or it is sabotage. It is very strange that since the Americans have come we eat less than we did when the Germans were here. It is very strange but otherwise it is more pleasant. The Germans made us build a concrete wall along the *plage*. They

gave us all a number and made us work. Not that we did much—but we ate. I asked him how his brother was, who had abandoned the sea, made good in Marseilles, and now made wine on his property up the valley. In health, said Père Moraud, his brother was all right but was low in spirits. Would I go out to see him? I said I had not the time but was sorry to hear about his spirits. Yes, said Père Moraud, his brother had lost two vintages which the Germans had taken from him and prospects were not good for this year. He could not afford to spray his vines. To purchase sufficient copper sulphate would cost more than the whole vintage was likely to be worth. Besides, the Gestapo had occupied his house for a year and had stolen many things of sentimental value. All this I would understand was particularly depressing for a man in his brother's position with two daughters of marriageable age. 'Mais', he added with an inclusive gesture, 'ça passe'.

But I had to leave; there was no time to risk meeting more friends and being detained. Georges I rewarded with a packet of cigarettes and a bar of chocolate and thereby, I feel sure, earned his eternal gratitude. I promised to return, but I never did and I doubt now if ever I shall. Do you remember those fourteenth of July? The fireworks which had no sinister meaning; the Provençal pipes and drums by the lamppost on the quay—which reminded me always of the Burning Bush—the Bastille, mounted in canvas on the oldest fishing-boat, being sunk in the harbour, and how we danced the Farandol all round the town; and the trouble M. got into when he announced to a young man the following morning that he had '*bien baisé*' his sister the night before—meaning something so much more innocent; and those autumn evenings chugging home with the fishing-boats, the harbour lamps alight and the moon hanging low over the cliffs, the women waiting for the catch with their enormous baskets on the quay, the sardines silver in the nets, and the lights from André's and the Café du Port and always the music of that quick French impossible two-step or Tino Rossi wailing '*Souviens-toi sous les branches dans un bois d' Ajaccio-o-o?*'

I confess I was depressed as I headed the jeep for Cannes. There seemed to be confirmation for the stories I had heard in Marseilles: the warehouses full of potatoes and cheese which could not be issued to the hungry people except on authority

from Paris and when, after much delay, the authority arrived, the food was found to have gone bad: the cargo of olive oil from North Africa which was sent in drums that had previously contained petrol and had not been cleaned in the interval. From my own experience I knew that in Marseilles I had the choice of eating American rations at home or paying five pounds for them in a black market restaurant—in the latter case with the addition, perhaps, of a little fish. The index figure for American goods on the black market could at this time be gauged by the price of cigarettes; they were now at 120 frs. for a packet of twenty. Besides it now seemed to me that I had heard that tone of voice with the same meaningless optimism in which Père Moraud said '*ça passe*' before; the same acceptance of hardship, the belief that the mere passive acceptance of suffering was sufficient. I remembered that phrase repeated endlessly in 1939 '*cette fois il faut en finir*'—repeated casually as a remark on the weather without urgency in bars, cafés, on the trains and in the Metro—and the depths to which France had fallen. The difficulty the French appeared to find either as classes, communities or even fortuitous small groups of individuals, of whatever *bonne volonté* each individual might separately be, was of standing together, or working for one generally admitted desirable end. There were too many traditional disparities—catholicism, protestantism, a hopeless inherited royalist cause, freemasonry, freethinking and how many more—these could never be subordinated, it appeared, to anything less impassioned than the over-riding emotionalism of revolution.

Cannes had a very different atmosphere. The Croisette had been freed of mines and the concrete barricades had been demolished. The hotels were full of American officers who mingled happily on the terrace of the Carlton bar with what remained of cosmopolitan Riviera society—and what remained was surprisingly large—over cocktails at 100 frs. a glass. The members of this society were individually much concerned with the telling to all who would listen of the hardships to which they had been subjected and the dangers which they had endured; 'I was literally compelled, physically, my dear, to ask him to dinner,' they would say when recounting some incident of a German general from whom petrol had been secured and a permit to drive to Paris. Nor were they backward in condemning those

whom they deemed to have collaborated. And, of course, the period of the F.F.I. and the *épuration* rivalled in horror the domination of the Gestapo! There were some, and for these no praise can be high enough, who helped escaping prisoners, assisted in the landing of arms for the *Maquis*, and died, many of them, in the torture chambers of the Gestapo. But these, it must be admitted, were few; the majority of those who were not French had lived in *résidence forcée* in some village in the interior (more often than not in Haute Savoie) and had passed the war comfortably amongst the local produce of butter, eggs, poultry and vegetables. The moment they were liberated they flocked back to their villas on the Riviera—most of which were unharmed—and remade their lives as best they could on the old plan. In this many of them were eminently successful. The money problem for the richer English and Americans was easily solved. Those whose credit was known to be good, were able to cash unnamed and undated cheques at a rate of 100 to 150 frs. to the dollar and 500 to 600 frs. to the pound with the black marketeers, who were prepared to gamble on the eventual collapse of the franc and the prospect of finding themselves one day in the possession of dollar and sterling balances.

All this, however, was unknown to me when Madame P. asked me to luncheon. Was it really all right, I said—the food question in these difficult times . . . Madame P. insisted and, I thought, looked at me curiously. You have only just arrived, she said—more as if stating a fact than asking a question.

The villa looked even grander and more luxurious than I remembered it. I suppose for so long one's eye had been unaccustomed to luxurious interiors, marbles, porcelains, rich silks and rooms scented with expensive flowers. There were about twenty people, the Prince de F., the Princess G. and the Duchesse de N. I must meet Monsieur A., said Madame P., such a charming man, so clever, he had recently made millions . . . There were also two American generals of the sugar-daddy type who showed an inclination to address the company alternately in that slow, throat-clearing drawl so much affected by the higher ranks in the American army, on the general subject of just in what respects American civilization was superior to anything in Europe. The conversation turned to mines; villa gardens near the sea were full of them. It appeared that in order to get them

cleared pressure must be brought to bear on the municipality; they would then send German prisoners—without the proper implements of course—to lift them. When the garden had been declared clear the proper course it seemed, to be perfectly safe, was to hire a herd of goats for fifty pounds to graze in the garden. For each goat blown up one paid fifteen pounds. At the end of a week the garden was considered safe. We drank champagne cocktails and went in to luncheon. The table was a mass of silver and flowers and Waterford glass. The innumerable courses were served by a butler and two footmen on old Staffordshire. I remember the lobster, the saddle of mutton, the soufflé and Madame P. bemoaning the horrors of war, for, as she said, without a third footman the last vegetable could never reach the table really quite hot.

It was delightful to drive up to Vence once more, but it appeared that our directions were not good. We stopped to inquire the way. Where, we asked, could we find the villa of Monsieur Matisse?—Monsieur Matisse?—Yes, Monsieur Matisse, the painter.—Ah, Monsieur Matisse; we should find him two miles along the road on the right-hand side; but if we wanted repairs to our car he feared Monsieur Matisse was no longer in business . . . No, no, we protested, Monsieur Matisse the well-known painter. There was, he regretted, only one Monsieur Matisse in Vence and without doubt he owned the garage; it was, of course, possible that he painted in his spare time. . . . Unfortunately, we omitted to inquire.

At length we found the villa—solid, red and as ugly as only a French bourgeois villa can be. Matisse himself came out into the dark hall to receive us and led us into a large airy room. Here the full splendour of his dress was revealed to us—scarlet slippers, sponge-bag trousers, magenta waistcoat, peach-coloured shirt and round his neck a most elegant yellow muslin cravat falling in frill upon frill almost to the waist, the whole covered in a camel-hair coat. The room itself was lined with the brilliant colours of his own paintings and filled with the twittering of birds—canaries, doves, budgerigars in large cages. In a corner sat an old man dressed in black with skull-cap, beard and spectacles apparently engaged in illuminating a manuscript. (My companion afterwards put forward the theory that this was the real Matisse!) We were able to give Matisse news of his son

in New York and then the talk turned—as it always does in France—to the occupation. No, it had not affected his own work—that had continued always as his health permitted. But the Germans had made every effort to ensnare the artists. They had been clever enough to realize the propaganda value of persuading the well-known painters to visit Germany and to reconsider for the time being their verdict on degenerate plutocratic Jewish art. It was one way, they thought, straight to the heart of France. Had many accepted? we asked. A few, he said, *mais que voulez-vous? En question de politique ils sont des enfants*. And as for poor Ségonzac, he continued, with his spectacles glinting, he would have to ask many Jews to dinner *pour se remettre en selle!*

That night sitting on the terrace with the lights of Cannes and la Napoule far below, framed between cypress trees, the coloratura of the nightingales piercing the drone of the cicadas, with only the dark shadows of the warships against the moonlit bay to remind one of the problems of war and peace, it seemed to me that there was no clue to the future of France. I had met the poor, puzzled and bewildered; the rich, grasping and unthinking; the artist, detached and wisely tolerant. This was not all France, indeed but a tiny portion of it, and yet I felt it was symptomatic of the whole. I have not recorded for you the lip-service paid to de Gaulle by some, the frank admiration of others, the growing dislike of his *éminence grise*, the infinite gradations of irreconcilable political feeling. To what is this incapacity for compromise due? Is it to that intellectual clarity, that intransigent logic for which the French have so long been famed? I believe it is due to fear; fear of Russia, of a renascent Germany, of the Right, of the Left, of next winter, of themselves. Their logic is founded on false premises, and intellectual clarity should point to unity, labour and organization. Instead there is fear and chaos.

I regret, dear reader, ending on this pessimistic note, but all is not yet lost. You may, too, very well think that my rambling letter fails to support my conclusions. No one, more than I, could wish them to be wrong.

II—A VISIT FROM MONSIEUR BENDA

VIOLET HENSON

Hammamet, 24 June 1945.

YESTERDAY afternoon, Jacques brought Julien Benda to see us. In the morning, we had met Jacques on the beach and he had talked about him. He said he was seventy-eight and a brilliant old man who hated going to see people or places, he replied when asked to do so, that he preferred his imagination. This sounded so unusual and sympathetic that I begged Jacques to use whatever wiles or guile he could to drag him to us.

Somehow, he succeeded.

Without much hope, I changed into my one new dress in five years—a pink cotton American Lend-Lease—snatched from the jaws of the *Marché Noir* well before it had got its teeth into it, and started waiting. Whenever I am cleaned up and tidy I wait, they always seem to go together and on the whole the combination is discouraging.

However, this time my boredom was not prolonged. About six o'clock Jacques's car drove up and there they were. Monsieur Benda was a small old man with a fringe of white hair and a beady and ironical face. He suffered, I guessed, from rheumatism, as he was heavily clad in a thick suit and his long French drawers peeped out from the ends of his trousers. The weather, June in Tunisia, was extremely hot.

That afternoon, before they came, I had searched through my library for *Le Trahison des Clercs* with the vague idea that I might—for the first time in my life—ask a well-known writer to sign one of his books for me. My subconscious told me firmly that I would not; I have always wished to do so but have never succeeded; something, perhaps cowardice—or even good manners—prevents me. But the idea still persists. However, *Le Trahison des Clercs* had vanished, perhaps the Germans had burnt it, with many others, or a borrower had mistaken it for a gift, as they so often do. In any case, it had ceased to be a complication.

I knew that Monsieur Benda would detest seeing the garden, particularly so as it is locally famous, so I took him straight indoors and settled him into the only and extremely uncomfortable armchair in our pillaged house, trusting that as a

Frenchman he would not be difficult from the 'comfort' angle, I felt he might be difficult from almost any other.

Conversation, until lubricated by glasses of wine, flagged a little. I searched my mind for the right subject to feed him with; at last I got him going by a remark on dictators, saying that if they were only forced to travel when they came to power—or even before—many wars might be averted, their complete ignorance of the mentality of other countries was always a menace.

'Yes,' he said, 'that went for Hitler and Mussolini, but Stalin *had* travelled.'

'Switzerland,' I said, 'they all go there at some time.'

'No, Stalin went all through Italy as well, and,' he added, 'one realizes what a remarkable man he is because he ignored completely all the things that people look at there!'

He began to warm up: he had himself travelled nearly everywhere. He talked about humanity, saying that the only race that had that virtue were the Anglo-Saxons, and he added generosity to them as well.

'I'll give you an example. Every moderate-sized house in England and America has a spare room for friends. Do you find that in France? Never!' He said 'never' with violence, looking round at his audience which included three French friends. I smirked with pleasure at this appreciation of our national virtues.

Then he told us how once, in America, he was in a train that divided at a certain place and how, too late, he discovered that he had missed the right moment and was in the wrong part of it for his destination.

'Naturally,' he said, 'as a Frenchman I began to cry out, to gesticulate—to make a scene. At once, a complete stranger, sitting near me, said "Don't—get—excited". He repeated this short phrase slowly to us in English with evident satisfaction, and paused dramatically. 'Then,' he went on, 'this stranger, this man who had never seen me before, told me that everything could be arranged, and it was. They telephoned, they stopped the train, they put me back where I should be, with kindness and humanity. Do you think that could happen in France? Never!'

Again there was a pause, and I began to think how charming he was. When one has lived through the war in a country where—unofficially—everything Anglo-Saxon, except their cigarettes, is almost universally disliked, one cannot help a feeling of warmth and gratitude at hearing a few kind words about one's race.

He talked about London: said it was the capital with the greatest personality in the world. When a French listener asked him why, he said it was difficult to explain, he thought it was the combination of tradition and a humane, ever-moving and changing democracy.

Then, when someone (perhaps it was I) made the usual banal remark about being forced to live in this horrible epoch, he replied:

'But why? You have all the epochs in history to choose from!'

My husband laughed and said, 'That's what I've always done'.

Monsieur Benda looked at him inscrutably.

The conversation turned to English writers; he said that he had met one of our younger poets in Spain, during the civil war.

'A good young man,' he said, 'very naïve and trustful.' His face became more ironic than ever. I thought it best not to press for his opinion on his literary merits.

On Proust: that he had set out to write one thing and it had turned—unconsciously—into something else, something far greater and more important than the writer had realized.

What he said about contemporary French writers was not what those writers might wish to hear, so I will leave that alone.*

By then it was nearly eight o'clock, he looked at Jacques and stood up to leave. But it was not quite the end. My husband, with the determination of a passionate gardener, walked him to a nearby sunken garden, with a pool backed by two Roman columns and made him look at it. He submitted, gently and with humanity.

SELECTED NOTICES

The Course of German History. By A. J. P. Taylor. Hamish Hamilton. 12s. 6d.

In the past six years there must have been many who have sought, by the study of German history, to understand the crisis through which we have lived, many who have turned to the public libraries for help in this dark and problematical matter. They will not have found them very helpful. There is the learned and conscientious Dr. Gooch, of course, indefatigable with his scissors and paste, but not very illuminating on causes, and the unspeakable Mr. Dawson, who swallows everything whole; and then there are the Germans themselves, the interminable frothblowers of the Bismarckian era, who put so much in, and the virtuous neuters of the Republic, who leave so much out, and the German political thinkers, depth opening below depth (for nonsense can be infinitely profound), from whom one turns quickly away, even when they are summarized by Mr. Rohan Butler and M. Vermeil, overcome with

* It has just been published.—EDITOR.

giddiness and nausea; and in the end one decides it is no good, there is no solution to the enigma; and turning from interpretation to hard and neutral facts, one is content, if one is wise, with Sir John Clapham's *Economic History of France and Germany*, the only really helpful book hitherto available on that dark and foreign subject.

Now there is another. Mr. A. J. P. Taylor is, I find, the only other English writer who can make German history comprehensible. He has already made sense of Bismarck's colonial policy; and he has now undertaken the huge task of doing the same, in a single short volume, for the history of modern Germany. He does not claim to have entirely succeeded. 'Now that this book is written', he admits in his preface, 'I find German history not only as distasteful, but as mysterious as before'. But that is only a relative failure; for no one can make sense of nonsense, and nonsense is so large a part of German political thought as to constitute part of German history as well. As this quotation shows, Mr. Taylor is somewhat unsympathetic to his subject. This too is an advantage; for it is a curious fact that all who have written sympathetically of German history have been bores. Mr. Taylor writes with a lively antipathy, not as one communicating an enthusiasm, but as one diagnosing a disease; and he is very readable.

Mr. Taylor begins (where all modern history must begin) with the Reformation: with Luther, whose obscene hatred of reason and the values of western civilization is a recurrent phenomenon in German psychology. (He does, I think, dangerously oversimplify the significance of Luther in relating him *directly* to German economic decline. Luther spoke for the most prosperous state in Germany; that Lutheranism afterwards settled in economic backwaters is a secondary development.) He skims lightly over the helplessness of German politics in the sixteenth, and the rise of Prussia in the seventeenth century; and begins his detailed analysis in 1815. But even before that date, certain of the cardinal features of German history, which have determined its course since, are apparent: the total unreality of its politics (and therefore the ineffectiveness of any public opinion), and the dualism of German psychology, now painfully imitating, now shrilly repudiating the West.

After 1815, Mr. Taylor has compressed so much into so small a space that it is hazardous to attempt a further simplification. In brief, he distinguishes three principal elements in German history: the Prussian Junkers, who, needing every technique of efficiency, every economy of effort, to cultivate their infertile, conquered estates, for long represented the only practical force in German politics, and were raised to be the ruling caste of Germany by Bismarck; the industrialists of the Prussian Rhineland, who, excluded from politics by the Junker aristocracy, devoted all their ability to the development, and overdevelopment, of their vast concerns, until the economic equilibrium of Germany could only be restored by the sacrifice of Europe; and finally, the Pangermanism of the non-Prussian bourgeoisie and its odious professors—the ideology of a class which, having seeped over all the frontiers of Eastern Europe, began to claim the protection of a new political frontier against the Slav nationalism that it had awakened. To find and preserve a satisfactory relation between these three elements would have required a continuous tradition of political wisdom; instead, Germany produced a tradition of political imbecility, punctuated by disastrous genius: the genius of the Prussian

Bismarck, whom Mr. Taylor represents as a mere political virtuoso postponing the inherent disasters of his system by a succession of brilliant conjuring tricks; and the atavistic genius of Hitler, the Pan-German sorcerer who sought to retrieve these disasters by still more ambitious adventures, sustained not by the skill of a conjurer, but by the blind faith of a somnambulist. For a satisfactory relation had somehow to be found if Germany was to survive: to survive, not only against the West (as Western historians have too often believed), but also against the vast, organized Slav world that menaced and penetrated the indefinite, indefensible frontier in the East.

In interpreting the possible relations between these elements which occurred to German politicians, Mr. Taylor brings out two alternative policies: the 'Greater German' programme, being the unlimited Eastern policy of Pangermanism in opposition to Russian Pan Slavism; and the 'Little German' programme, being the limited Prussian ideal of obtaining secure frontiers by conquest in the West, and accommodation with Russia at the expense of Poland in the East. Bismarck was the classic exponent of the Little German policy; the revolutionaries of 1848 (including Marx) were Greater Germans. Bismarck succeeded: but with the collapse of Austria-Hungary (which he had used as his agent to neutralize Pangermanism) and the Bolshevik Revolution (which confused the hitherto simple equation of the Little German programme), the artificial political balance of Bismarck's Germany was overthrown, and Hitler was ultimately able to unite Greater and Little German aims in a single programme of universal conquest which alone could rectify the otherwise hopeless disequilibrium of German politics and German economy. He failed; and the disequilibrium will now be otherwise adjusted. Apart from these two parties, there is indeed a third which Mr. Taylor sometimes mentions, and never without contempt: the party of the 'good Germans'. These are the Germans who have never thought about the Slavs and therefore do not need a policy in respect of them. They are good because they are ineffective. 'There were, and I dare say are, many millions of well-meaning kindly Germans; but what have they added up to?'

This is the barest summary of Mr. Taylor's brilliant book; and a summary of a work already so compressed may easily do injustice to its thesis. The book is full of interesting matter, and the analysis of the ever-increasing top-heaviness of German industry, which forced Bismarck to embark on his tariff-policy in 1879, and led, in the hands of his incompetent successors, to the necessity of war, is made with terrible clarity. The chapters on the reign of William II are admirable; it has never been treated so lucidly before. To Bismarck Mr. Taylor seems a little less than fair. Bismarck at least chose a rational policy. If one had to choose a ruling class for an utterly unpolitical people, the Prussian Junkers were at least a practical class—in fact, the only practical class available; and it is difficult to agree that they were already an anachronism in 1850, when they survived their defeat in 1918 and remained the only class which even attempted to oppose the Nazis. In resolutely opposing Pangermanism, Bismarck successfully resisted the force which has proved disastrous to Germany; and it is illogical to say that he failed because his successors could not continue his triumphs. Bismarck's political fault seems, on Mr. Taylor's own showing, to have been not in using the Junkers in politics, but in using them too exclusively.

Another small point that might be made is that Mr. Taylor has said nothing of the influence of the geo-politicians on recent German history. Mr. Taylor is in general as contemptuous as Marx of German ideologies. But there is nonsense and nonsense. The ideology of 1848 was abstract thought borrowed from France and detached from the political conditions which alone gave it relevance; the geopolitical school provided the intellectual basis of the New Order, and was as important to Nazism as Luther to the German Princes; and the New Order was a practical, though drastic, solution of the economic disequilibrium of Europe for which Germany was largely responsible. It was also very nearly attained.

'This book', says Mr. Taylor in his preface, 'is a *pièce d'occasion*'. It is being widely read by people who are interested not in the past, which it analyses, but in the present, which it may explain. What is the lesson which emerges from it? At first it seems to describe a dead world. Of the three elements which have made and unmade German history, the Prussian Junkers are finished: Russian expropriation has killed them for ever. The Rhenish industries are, for the moment at least, destroyed; if they revive, it may well be as the industrial centre not of Germany, but of a totally different political unit. Pangermanism indeed survives, at least among prisoners-of-war, who have not felt the full impact of defeat, and who blame Hitler, not for representing, but for betraying, that distressful dogma. But ideas without material roots are irrelevant survivals; and if the totality of defeat reduces Germany again to a geographical expression, Pangermanism will be left, a harmless fantasy, in the *Lustreich des Traumes*. But even if all this be true; even if Germany has threatened the world for the last time—if the problem has at last been forcibly solved, and Germany, as a political experiment, can be pronounced a final failure—there is still a practical moral to be drawn. It is the necessity of politics. There were once people who believed that all politics were relative, being merely an aspect or reflexion of economic realities. The history of Germany is a terrible refutation of that heresy. Politics are not only the reflexion, but the regulation of economic conditions. Disastrously unpolitical, the Germans have allowed economic conditions to develop unregulated, and have then allowed anyone who claimed knowledge of the mystery to assume control. It is this fact, so obvious from Mr. Taylor's book, which makes the only alternative he suggests so desperate. Looking at the disastrous course of German history from Luther to Hitler, he hankers after the old municipal traditions, the free cities, of the medieval Empire. This is impossible romanticism. Germany has been ruined by bad politics; it may be restored by good politics, but not by none.

H. R. TREVOR-ROPER.

SOME RECENT FRENCH BOOKS

Aurélien. By Aragon. Gallimard. Paris. 180 francs.

AURÉLIEN, *le bel Aurélien* as he is called, is one of the many young men who survived from the last War to find themselves unable to assimilate their appalling experiences and who plunged into a search for a sensation strong enough to fill the void created by Peace. The book is set in the Paris of 1922, a period which Aragon evokes with all the magic of a nostalgia, and is concerned with the love affairs of a group of friends.

There is a subtle difference in the connotations of 'amour' and 'love'. The English novel has been largely frightened of exploring the full ramifications of this experience and 'love' is too often condoned by making the protagonists very young, with marriage and children as the natural aim of their passion. The French writer is unrestricted by this convention, and *Aurélien* falls naturally into that French literary tradition dedicated to the exploration of the full implications of 'amour', a tradition of which Racine is probably the greatest master. Indeed Aragon deliberately links himself with Racine, not only by making one of his verses a key to the thoughts of Aurélien, 'Je demeurai longtemps errant dans Césarée', but by calling his heroine Bérénice. He has set out to explore the different manifestations of 'amour' through his various characters, and he has created some brilliant examples: the famous actress approaching middle-age and considering her passing beauty.

'Ah merde! Elle écrasa la cigarette qu'elle avait allumé.

'Sur la banquette, en face, il y avait un jeune homme très élégant, un blond avec des taches de rousseur et un nez épaté. Il la regardait avec une fixité qu'elle connaissait bien. Elle le regarda aussi, avec ses yeux de myope, leur insolence. Il rougit, et il pâlit très subitement. Alors, elle se rappela comment elle regardait Hippolyte quand elle jouait Phèdre: et elle lui sourit'; the miserable masochistic feelings she inspires in her husband and an old admirer; her lover whose desire for reassurance makes him morbidly attached to his sexual prowess and leads him into the strange mental perversity of making all his women fit some private drama, and the dark puritan conscience of his Huguenot wife who is tormented by the conviction that she has 'sinned' because she is slightly in love with Aurélien. All these characters build up a background for the central theme of the love between Aurélien and Bérénice. We are warned that this love will end in grief because of what Aragon calls Bérénice's 'goût de l'absolu', and here with a surgeon's skill, he puts his finger on the cancer at the heart of so many disastrous love affairs. Those who have it 'sont ceux pour qui rien n'est jamais assez quelque chose'. It is also Perfectionism, the belief in Romantic Love, in 'Mr. Right', etc., but above all it is the inability to accept anything imperfect, i.e. human, in the person one loves which on the reverse side of the coin is an inability to accept the limitations of one's own personality. As Aragon says, 'Qui a le goût de l'absolu renonce par la même a tout bonheur', and Bérénice is impelled to destroy any possibility of happiness for Aurélien or herself. But Aurélien also fails to control the course of events for he is equally wrapped up in his own romantic-conventional ideas of what love and a loved woman should be. His attitude emerges in the course of a conversation with the young poet who is also in love with Bérénice, and with whom she lived in order to escape Aurélien. The poet says: 'Vous et vos pareils, vous concédez encore le droit d'aimer aux femmes adultères, a condition qu'elles ne le soient qu'une fois. Un mari, ça ne compte pas. C'est encore presque vierge, une femme mariée. On peut respecter une femme qui trompe son mari avec un seul amant', and Aurélien is forced to admit the truth of this accusation, and later when he discovers that Bérénice has an intelligence he thinks furiously, 'C'était injuste. Une femme a une autre genre d'intelligence... Quand elles se mêlent de ce qui ne les regarde pas.' In love, Aurélien can only react in the conventional atavistic way. 'Au

fond, le siècle d'Aurélien s'écrit en deux mots: il y a avait eu la guerre, et il y avait Bérénice', and of the two, the War wins, for beside his horror of it Aurélien has a lingering nostalgia for the security of the years spent in an entirely male society, and after spending an evening with friends from his old regiment they are able to say, 'Oui, c'était peut-être le bon temps'.

Because they are so frightened of spoiling their love, it becomes impossible for them either to sleep together or discuss the future, and when, after days of torment and prevarication, Bérénice comes in the evening to Aurélien's flat, it is to find him absent. He returns in the morning, having, under the pressure of alcohol and misery, spent the night with a tart. Bérénice's ideals cannot embrace such a turn of events, and Aurélien in the ensuing row-conversation, desperately tries to repair the damage by throwing in his pathetic masculine 'bid'.

'Vous savez que je vous aime, et vous m'aimez, vous m'aimez! Osez dire que vous ne m'aimez pas...'

Elle se tut. Il triompha.

'Là, vous voyez! Il faut regarder la vie en face.'

Il avait bonne mine à dire ça! Il s'expliqua: 'Vous divorcerez... vous serez ma femme...'

Bérénice se mit à rire. Le comble! A qui crôyait-il donc avoir affaire? Ces messieurs, quand ils vous parlent mariage, ils croient avoir tout dit! Elle n'était ni une petite jeune fille effrayée, ni Simone (the tart) peut-être... Elle connaissait ça déjà, le mariage... Comme un homme peut remettre tout d'un coup les choses sur leur plan dérisoire! Elle cessa de rire. Il n'y avait rien de drôle dans tout ça. Elle venait de mesurer un monde, un abîme. Et ce monde-là, cet abîme, c'était le monde qu'il portait en lui, Aurélien... Un homme n'est pas seul. Et ce qu'il pense, ses idées, c'est ce que pense ce monde, ce sont les idées des autres, de tous les autres autour de lui, la famille, les copains, les indifférents...'

Thus Aurélien and Bérénice part because they are unable to navigate the twin rocks on which all romantic love is shipwrecked. For him it is 'Les femmes avec lesquelles on couche, ce n'est pas grave. Le chiendent, ce sont celles avec lesquelles on ne couche pas...' and for her, 'C'est beaucoup plus facile de coucher avec quelqu'un qu'on n'aime pas vraiment, qu'avec quelqu'un qu'on aime...'

The present War appears in the Epilogue which rounds off the stories of the protagonists, but it also comes as a hideously logical solution to what has gone before. Back in the Army Aurélien finds himself on the eve of the defeat in the provincial town where Bérénice lives with her husband, and they spend two gruesome days in her family circle discovering on what a tissue of illusion their love was based, but also discovering that this illusion was the best thing in their lives. As Aragon says of this incongruous group of people, 'Tout ce que les réunissait était la défaite'.

This novel will probably come as a surprise to many of Aragon's admirers and may create for him a new audience which never heard the appeal of 'Les Lilas et Les Roses', far less of Surrealism. But this is a good thing, for it is rare to find an intelligent novel and Aragon has again shown his mastery of this genre. In two scenes—one describing the *soirée de réunion* of Aurélien's old regiment, and the other the death of the young poet in a street battle—he has written passages worthy of the great nineteenth-century tradition.

Le Médisant par Bonté. By Joe Bosquet. Gallimard. 130 francs.

'*Le médisant par bonté*' is M. Bosquet himself, and in this strange and beautifully written book he describes for us the lives, the characters and the most secret problems of the inhabitants of the provincial town of 'Carqueyrolles'.

M. Bosquet approaches his victims with the precision and restrained emotion of a scientist investigating some rare specimen—in the subtitle he compares himself to an entomologist—and this curiously passionate yet formal approach gives the book some of the sense of timelessness which grows out of the clear light of early afternoon. He has not set out to formulate a philosophy or draw conclusions from his discoveries, but a personal attitude emerges which is expressed when he says: 'C'est grave de vivre. On dirait qu'il n'est qu'un homme au monde et que chacun de nous n'est lui qu'un peu. Il faut se hâter d'annoncer la part qu'on a prise à sa vie parce qu'on est toute sa conscience et toute sa responsabilité', or 'Personne n'est dans la vie qu'on lui connaît, mais dans celle qu'il découvre et qui lui permet de croire qu'il n'est plus le même. Tout ce que nous nous donnons est perdu pour ce que nous serons. L'humain est nôtre. Ce qui est d'un homme ne nous est rien.'

The book simply consists of individual portraits of an extraordinary subtlety and penetration, and as each oyster is slowly prised open, we are certain of finding the pearl. It is difficult to quote from these descriptions as each remark is intertwined with its neighbours and the full flavour of M. Bosquet's exquisite style depends on a cumulative effect. The only flaw in the book is the natural defect of its virtues. M. Bosquet treats all aspects of a character and all events of a life with the same level tone and the same absence of personal bias, whereas in most people's lives, while there are long periods where 'nothing happens', there are also peak moments of pleasure or despair and periods of crises where decisions have to be taken. But probably if he had tried to inject what would have been for him a false note of drama, he would have lost the strength of his present attitude. In a *note sur la médisance* he explains his method: 'Si l'écrivain est assez fort pour s'ignorer entièrement, son œuvre est faite: ce qu'il écrit n'est plus ce qu'il écrit. Il observe son public par le trou de la toile, comme un monteur de marionnettes. Tout se réduit, se simplifie, tourne à quelques gestes très courts, on dirait qu'il s'agit de sauver quelqu'un. Il découvre la saveur de cette pensée que tout le monde a un peu approchée, mais dont on ne conçoit tout le sens qu'après l'avoir écrite: "Si tu as la chance d'aimer la vérité, use ta vie à la faire aimer et ce que tu auras écrit durera plus que toi".'

* Those who have seen Carqueyrolles through M. Bosquet's eyes will always feel its fascination, and those who have followed his search for 'la vérité' will find they have an increased respect for it.

Le Puits des Miracles. By André Chamson. Gallimard. Paris. 80 francs.

THIS is M. Chamson's war book. A description of life in a provincial town in the unoccupied zone, it records the increasing wretchedness of the population over the two years preceding the total occupation of France, and the parallel evolution of a new oppressor class of Black Marketeers, power-seeking bureaucrats and war profiteers—a class drawn for the most part from the capitalist bourgeoisie, but probably most odious in its lesser hangers-on. Superficially, *Le Puits des Miracles* is a tribute to the appalling sufferings of the

good poor: in fact it is a tribute to M. Chamson's reactions to these sufferings—a more difficult line to bring off. Self-satisfied men are dangerous recorders of great events, for their range is limited by the keyboard of their own complacency; and to enjoy this book the reader must like the writer's personality. However, there are brilliant passages in his attack on the bourgeois, and in his account of daily privations he does make us remember that the human animal likes to be fed four times a day.

Loin de Rueil. By Raymond Queneau. Gallimard. Paris. 43 francs.

JACQUES L'AUMÔNE, the son of the draper of Rueil, is a day-dreamer. The little boy who sees himself without difficulty either as the cowboy hero of a Wild West film, or the Pope rearranging the marriage laws to suit his own convenience, develops into the chemist of a provincial rat poison factory, who knows that he has been—among other things—an English Lord (by adoption), the Grand Lama (by vocation), President of the Republic of Nicaragua (by election), President of the Republic of Costa Rica (by revolution) and President of the Republic of Guatemala (by occupation). Always beside the Jacques L'Aumône seen by the Paris suburb of Rueil and the rest of the world, walks the Jacques L'Aumône he sees himself at that moment to be; and so exquisitely is his fantasy life—that most private of all private property—laid bare, so inextricably do the actual and the fantasy become entwined that we must ask: Which is the real one? One Jacques L'Aumône could not exist without the other as a temporary excursion into ascetism so painfully shows. No answer is given to this question of identity, for at the end of the book the two Jacques L'Aumône merge for a moment into one person called James Charity. James Charity is the famous Hollywood film star that Jacques L'Aumône finally becomes, and his first film *Le Peau des Rêves* recapitulates in the fantasy medium of the film the strange career of the boy from Rueil. No wonder that the worthy draper and his wife, when reading in the newspaper of the exploits of James Charity, fail to recognize their son whom they rightly conclude to be a miserable unknown.

Above all, *Loin de Rueil* is a deliciously funny book for M. Queneau has justly decided that the day-dreamer (i.e. the suburb-dweller) in all his nakedness, is an amusing sight, and in the literature of humour *Loin de Rueil* will stand very high. The portrait of another day-dreamer, the suburban poet, Des Cigales, admired in *Rueil, Nanterre, Suresnes et Courbevoie* almost up to Neuilly, with his fits, is of an exquisite irony. (His disease is 'Ontalgia', ... *une maladie existentielle, ça ressemble à l'asthme mais c'est plus distingué.*) Much of the effect is gained by M. Queneau's use of an almost Joycean French, which uses invented and composite words to their best advantage. But *Loin de Rueil* really succeeds as a comic triumph because we are invited to laugh at the substance of which it is made. Laughter is one of the first casualties of the bourgeois upbringing. Too many things must excite blushes instead of guffaws, because they are emotionally entwined with the gods of property or propriety, or simply because to laugh implies recognition of the true situation and destroys the cosy celluloid version which sustains the uneasy. M. Queneau crashes through the polite titter of the tea party and plunges us into the world of the unambivalent giggle.

SONIA BROWNELL.

New Writing and Daylight. Edited by John Lehmann. 176 pp. Hogarth Press. 10s. 6d.

Crown to Mend. By C. L. Boltz. 159 pp. Hamish Hamilton. 7s. 6d.

New Writing and Daylight remains easily the most interesting and best-directed of the sporadic miscellanies. There is a nice solid critical section in this number which includes the best criticism of Auden's new work by Henry Reed, and a lecture on Proust by Capetanakis which is a delight to the mind. I liked the author's clairvoyance in saying 'that is why we find people asserting that he was the perfect snob, but we should not forget that snobbery is a way, like any other, of assuaging one's suffering'. Those who have observed snobs will agree that the satisfaction of the snob is to banish early memories of torture and inferiority in the company of those whom he supposes never to have experienced them, and who once seemed unattainable, even if now they are not even entertaining. There are lively articles on the French Theatre by M. Astruc, and on the English cinema by Maclaren Ross, and a fine fragment of commentary on *Lear* by Miss Sitwell. There is a story by Elizabeth Bowen on the nightingale in Regent's Park. The editor contributes a poem and a preface—both reveal the weakness which still prevents him from becoming a much better writer—he is word-bound; afraid to liberate his own personality; his poem is in the manner of the 'eighties, his preface is like a vetted script, a prize-giving address, yet it is full of excellent things. Mr. Lehmann is a poet, a critic, an editor and a publisher, and also incidentally a good academic mind. His predicament is, with all these handicaps, how to become a writer. Can he extract the best of which he is capable, and very good that is, from under the nose of his distinguished official self and collapse simultaneously that rigidity of diction which is the symptom of his bondage? He is exposed to what is perhaps the subtlest temptation of our time, for a writer, that of becoming the official exponent of a good cause in which he believes, and which has won the day. Delacroix wrote, '*avec du talent on fait tout ce qu'on veut, avec du génie tout ce qu'on peut*', and I do not believe that genius is anything more than talent which has been purged of its contemporary alloys. It is a hard saying, and when one has understood it, it does one in.

In a long footnote Mr. Lehmann trounces with unexpected peevishness a book on modern poetry called *Crown to Mend* by C. L. Boltz which I and a well-known poet were instrumental in getting published. *Crown to Mend* is addressed to the left-wing *Daily Mirror*-reading semi-philistine youth of today, and is an attempt to make them like and understand modern poetry. I think it is a good attempt and one which does not beg the question, but which goes to the root of what poetry is and produces various theories, one based on *gestalt* psychology as to its nature. It is not written for poets like Mr. Lehmann, it is to win him new readers. You may say it is useless to *teach* people to like poetry, but I don't agree. Mr. Boltz goes further, he not only teaches that, but advises them how not to produce quite such bad poetry. Apart from the first chapter he never writes down, and I am perplexed that Mr. Lehmann should devote so much of his valuable and thoughtful international survey to the castigating of a clear and vivid little text-book which is so manifestly on his side.

C. C.

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